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THE
N A B O B A T H O M E:

OR,

THE RETURN TO ENGLAND.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN INDIA."

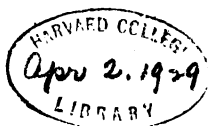
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Mrs. Franklin D. Brown.

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THE NABOB AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

*"Yet Caledonia, dear are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war,
Though cataracts foam, 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr!"*

BYRON.

DOCTOR M'ALPIN, like most men in India, had, for years after his arrival, sighed for the time when he should be enabled to revisit his native land—when he should be enabled with honour and credit to support the dignity of his ancient house; and, like many others also, he had deferred his departure from year to year, though many a year had passed since he had realized all that he had originally fixed upon as the utmost extent of his wishes.

When he had the power, and could go at any time, he found that "it was ridiculous for a man in the meridian of life to withdraw from active employment, and to sit down contented with little more than the patrimony of his ancestors." Then "it was unwise to resign a splendid appointment, which put fortune in his power, and gave him the opportunity of serving his friends." The death of his father and mother depressed his spirits, and "made him less anxious about returning just so soon;" that of his grandfather followed, and put him in possession of Fernbraes, the estate of his forefathers—more fertile in purple heathbells than golden grain.

"He was now the head of the house, and consequently more was expected of him, and, since he had stayed so long, he might even stay a little longer, and go among his own people as the only surviving male branch ought to do."

Last of all came tidings of the death of his only and much-beloved sister—the companion of his childhood—the friend of his youth—one whose image never rose to his mind unassociated with recollections of early happiness and tender love. She had been his confidant and counsellor in all his projects—in all his wishes. She had listened with unwearied patience to his early and ardent desires to see the world—she had walked with him over the heath and on the seashore—she had talked of his future hopes and his future prospects a thousand and a thousand times, and she, in the pride and fondness of sisterly affection, had foreseen and foretold his prosperous return; and though long years had passed since, this stroke brought her before him with the renewed feelings of early affection.

He felt her arms upon his neck—he heard the blessing which came from a bursting heart, when she kissed him at parting, and he looked up as if he almost expected to see the sister of his love leaning over him as she had done

then; but she for months had lain in the dark and narrow house before the information of his loss had reached him, and their earthly intercourse was finally closed.

"I have waited," he said, speaking to himself, as was his usual custom when anything agitated his mind, "until one year after another has taken every one from me that ever I wished to see; and now," he spoke in bitterness, "I'll wait no longer. Am I not old, and rich, and childless, and friendless, and who is to come after me in Fernbraes, for which I have done so much? Who is to uphold the honour of the ancient roof-tree? Much have I expended, and much have I remitted for planting and improving the old place, which in my day was a thought o'er bare, though it cannot be that now—but I fear the plantings will never shelter me or mine."

Strange as it may seem, the doctor now actually set about making the preparations which he had so long talked of and delayed; and he sometimes pleased himself with thinking that in his sister's family he might still find some one to love and cherish.

But to go back to the motives which had influenced his life. The truth was, that the worthy doctor, like many others, after a few years' residence in the country, had lost the ardent desire to return to his birthplace which at first tormented him—which he always expressed, and fancied that he still felt; years had brought new connexions and new friendships, and, though they never occupied in his heart the place of those he had left round his father's hearthstone, yet they exercised his kindly affections, and diminished the feeling of loneliness and isolation which every one possessed of the least sensibility must experience on making a solitary entry into life in a strange land.

Youth is slow to reason but quick to feel, and he who had been accustomed to find himself a first object—a central point at Fernbraes—felt wonder and mortification, on his first arrival, on discovering how small a space he occupied in Indian society. His local consequence had quite left him—he was no longer the heir-apparent—"the young laird"—nothing more than Mr. Assistant-surgeon M'Alpin, the peculiarity of whose Gaelic idiom and national predilections were his most marked claims to notice. Then he sighed to return; but time, which changes all things where there is any material to work upon (and in his case Nature had done her part), changed the raw Highland lad into the able and experienced physician; unremitting in his duty, indefatigable in his exertions for the wellbeing of those under his care, and

as attentive to the lowest native as to those whose life was favour, and whose health was fortune to him; and it also changed his situation from assistant-surgeon, tossing about with a corps, to that of "residency-surgeon" at Lucknow. His professional abilities procured him fortune—his intrinsic worth secured him friends—acquaintance with the world softened his extravagant prejudices; only leaving just enough of national peculiarity to give some spirited touches to his character, and preserve his individuality.

The kindness of his heart, and, perhaps, some tincture of his feudal feelings, extended to his numerous household, over whom he ruled with patriarchal sway, having bondmen and bondwomen born in his house. His servants rarely wished to leave him, and he seldom discharged them; so that, to use their own phrase, "their children's children eat of his salt, and dwell in the shadow of his protection." When delinquencies were committed, they knew "that the sahib's heart was tender;" and when his anger had expended itself, "sweet words," and a list of those who depended upon their exertions, and must suffer along with them, "would set all right;" and the good doctor, though perhaps he would not like to have had any one make the comparison, enjoyed something of the satisfaction among his black retainers at Lucknow which he expected among those of his own colour at Fernbraes; and he had also the satisfaction, whenever anything went wrong, to attribute the annoyance, whatever it might be, to "this vile country," and to be certain that in his own he would be exempt from it. Roguery and ingratitude were never heard of there—at least he never recollected to have met with them.

When he indulged in such excesses of enthusiasm, which were apt to break out on the receipt of letters from Europe, or of new books from the "modern Athens," Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow, with whom most of his evenings were passed, never omitted bringing to his memory a little history of whiskey-punch, which he would rather have forgotten.

"There are many things, you know, doctor," Mrs. Cheapstow used to say, "which are better in memory than in reality; the strength remains when the harshness is gone. I used to think, from your description, that goat-milk cheese was a very fine thing, until I saw the biting, moulded, blue reality, which was sent to you from Fernbraes, looking as venerable as if it had come out of Herclaneum."

"And the Highland nectar, doctor, which you promised us," said the colonel; "do you recollect what execrable stuff it proved; and what a headache you got by persisting to drink two or three glasses of it; and how, in the morning, you were fairly driven to confess that it had not just the relish it used to have at Fernbraes, and that, for 'this vile country,' claret, when it was well cooled, was a more suitable beverage?"

"There is no use in recollecting things that would be better forgotten," said the doctor, laughing, "and constantly keeping one in mind of one's degeneracy."

The doctor had thus stayed from year to year, grumbling, and increasing his fortune, until he had passed what has been popularly

called middle life, that is to say, fifty, or, in more polite phrase, that period which a French courtier, out of respect for the feelings of his monarch, who had lived half a century, and yet did not like to be thought older than other people, declared to be *l'age de tout le monde*; and he found that his hair had worn high off his temples, and had changed its originally yellow tint for white. The change in colour, however, was not very perceptible, as, in conformity to the military etiquette of his day, he still continued to wear powder. His regular and well-proportioned features had become thin and pale, though his light gray eyes still retained some of the penetrating earnestness of former years, particularly when his enthusiasm was excited, or the nervous irritability which climate had ingrafted on his naturally acute feelings was called into action.

The world laughs at enthusiasm in any age, though in youth it sometimes meets with toleration, as one of the follies which time will correct; but, notwithstanding the general voice against it, observation proves that it is the high springtide of feeling which carries the mind forward over all obstacles, and, under the curb of reason, leads to excellence; at least the good doctor thought so, and perfectly agreed with the philosopher who has defined enthusiasm to be "a transport of the mind, whereby it is led to think and imagine things in a sublime, surprising, and yet probable manner." His thin, tall figure retained its original rectitude of line, though a fall and pliancy in the shoulders showed that there also climate had done its work.

"He was," as he said himself, "compounded of excellent bone and capital muscle, though certainly a little relaxed by the fiery furnace in which he had been tried for such a length of time."

However, he trusted the good sharp breezes would set all that to rights again, and make a new man of him.

When not on duty, or occasions of ceremony, his unvarying dress was his white nankeen jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, shoes of the same material, and a light, broad-brimmed solar hat, covered with white muslin, so that in his whole dress he had not one coloured speck; and if his clothes were not as remarkable for the tightness of their fit as if they had been cut in Bond-street, they were, at least, very much so for the snow-like purity of their tint. The like taste displayed itself through his whole dwelling; for, though he covered his tables and couches with the books he was reading or might read, he never suffered this negligence on his own part to be an excuse for his servants permitting the least particle of dust to harbour among them; and though he liked his dogs to run about through his apartments, it was not until his *dooriah** had performed their ablutions.

In this way the doctor had sailed down the stream of time in all the independent ease and quiet uniformity of a bachelor's life at Lucknow, and had become so attached to the persons and things about him, that when, after his departure for Europe was fixed, he visited his friends for the last time, he could not bring himself to say "farewell," and left them under the idea that

* *Dooriah*—dogkeeper.

they should see him again. Most of his servants accompanied him to Calcutta, thus continuing to him for a little longer the satisfaction of being surrounded by the faces he was accustomed to see.

Dr. M'Alpin, like many others when they have attained the summit of their wishes, felt rather sorrow than joy in the prospect of the near accomplishment of his desire. He had been in the habit, for thirty years, of attributing every evil and annoyance he had met with to this "vile country," but, now that he was upon the point of leaving it forever, he thought of the long years of ease and independence he had enjoyed, passed in social and friendly intercourse with many whom he could never hope to see again; he thought of those whom death had separated from him, and retraced in his mind the lapse of years by the number of gaps it had made in the list of those who had started with him in the career of fortune. This depressing state of feeling led him back to the changes which had taken place in that home to which he was going.

"I wonder if they will know me," he said, as he walked up and examined his own face in the mirror. "I wonder if they will know the rosy-cheeked, curly-headed, active lad, who left them in the pride of expectation, in the pale face, sunk eyes, and bald forehead which I see before me; and yet I fear that I am more changed in mind than I am in body. I cannot deny to myself that no one can be expected to have patience with my nervous and irritable habits of life but Cussim Ali, who kens them so well; but alas!" he continued, perusing every line of his own features in the glass, as if he saw them for the first time, "who is there to recollect me? They are all gone! and the young ones who are now in their places are after my day."

He turned his back upon the mirror, and walked up and down the room: his eye fell upon a volume of picturesque views in Scotland, which had been among his first purchases on arriving in India. "It is my native land," he said aloud; "and, wherever a Scotchman passes his life, he ought to return to lay his bones there."

"Sahib,"* said Cussim Ali, who had been waiting quietly, and took the doctor's soliloquy for an order, "your slave waits; what is the sahib's order?"

"I have no order, Cussim," answered his master; "but do not forget that the sircar† gets warm clothes, and everything fit for you to go on board ship, since you have made up your mind to go with me."

"Yes, sahib, it is my nisib‡ to cross the sea. I have eaten your salt for many years, and now that I have lost all, and that no one of my house remains—not a son to lay my head in the earth," and a tear strayed over the old man's face, and down his white beard, which he wiped away with his long sleeve, "I shall go with you, sahib, who is my father and my mother; and when I die, you will put me in the ground, and not leave me to have the burial of a dog."

"Make yourself easy, Cussim Ali," replied the doctor; "if that happens, everything shall be done properly."

"Good, sahib, very good—I go with you."

Cussim and his master had borne the heat and burden of the day together, and, though warm attachment is not certainly the characteristic of native character, yet it is to be found; and amid the general apathy and heartlessness, which must be more or less the consequence of servitude, examples of true affection may be met with.

Possibly masters in all countries are too apt to forget that the affections of the human heart cannot be bought—that simple justice cannot purchase love—and that nothing short of affection can create affection. Mere attention, which is bestowed equally upon the comfort of servants and cattle, cannot excite gratitude.

CHAPTER II.

"Five-and-twenty years ago—

Alas! how time escapes! 'tis even so—
With frequent intercourse, and always sweet,
And always friendly, we were wont to cheat
A tedious hour.

As some grave gentleman in Terence says
('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days),
' Good luck, we know not what to-morrow brings—
Strange fluctuation of all human things!"

COWPER.

ARRIVED at Calcutta, Dr. M'Alpin's boats anchored off the Old Fort Ghaut, just behind the house of his friend Mr. Curzon, with whom he meant to take up his residence until his departure for Europe. They had arrived in the country in the same fleet, and, though they had not met for years, had always maintained a friendly correspondence.

The doctor's spirits, which had been depressed by his parting with his friends Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow at Lucknow, were greatly cheered by this meeting with his old friend Curzon. His gray eyes twinkled as he shook hands with him, and each for a moment regarded the changes which time had made on the other. "I have not enjoyed so much satisfaction since I left Lucknow," said the doctor, with an affectionate smile; "the sight of a friend's countenance, Curzon, is the best remedy for the evils of life. Ye have done more for me in five minutes, than all my reasoning and all my philosophy on board the boat was able to effect in a whole fortnight."

"Our satisfaction is equal, M'Alpin; the time is come when neither you nor I can set about making new friends, and, of consequence, we doubly value those who are left to us. Few, very few of those who came out with us are in existence now; and the young men of the present day are of a different stamp," answered Mr. Curzon.

A composed and gentle expression sat on his open brow; he spoke in a low, articulate tone, which perfectly suited the general character of his appearance, and his tall, thin figure, with long legs and hanging arms, was one often seen among those whose nervous system has been shaken by a long residence in an undermining climate.

The two friends spent the first evening of their meeting in mutual questions relative to their own affairs, and those who had been, or still were, the friends of both parties. As there was no company, they dined above in the draw-

* Sahib—sir, gentleman. † Sircar—native accountant.

‡ Nisib—fate.

ing-room, where the air circulated more freely than on the ground-floor.

When dinner was over, they had their chairs and hookahs placed in the veranda which overlooked the square, and enjoyed the little cool air which came off the great tank in the centre, always kept fresh and full by communication with the river. The shrubs and flowers which bound the broad gravel without the enclosure round the tank had a pleasing effect in the light of a clear, sweet night. The open windows of every well-lighted house round the square added much to the cheerfulness of the scene, and, smoking their hookahs as they sipped their wine, they spoke with the unreserve of those who felt that their thoughts and their feelings were matter of interest to each other.

"You," said Mr. Curzon, "have the near prospect of visiting your native land—I never shall."

"And why not? What prevents ye, if ye wish it?"

"Money—money: I have expended so much in the prosecution of my researches in Asiatic literature, that I shall never be able to quit the country."

"But with your allowance, how is that possible?"

"You forget, the monthly expense of learned natives transcribing for me has been a fortune of itself. I can show you, any day you please, my college in this house. You know I must have them to do the drudgery for me, even if our climate was a different one. How many men did our English Johnson employ in transcribing for his great work?"

"Doubtless that is a heavy expense, but your library is a mine of itself."

"Yes, if you consider the sums sunk there. It was impossible for me to prosecute some of my works without the purchase of an immense number, sometimes of all the manuscript copies of a particular author I might want, at any price which might be demanded for them by natives who understand their own interest too well not to make the most of it. They know that I must have the thing, therefore never scruple to make me pay for it. You know the uncertainty of a written character in a country so extensive as this, where men of learning have chosen to make variations, not only in the character, but in its signification, the truth of which it is impossible to ascertain without an accurate comparison of their different works."

"I know that from my own experience," answered the doctor. "Though without any pretensions to be a scholar, I know something of the Persian poets; and I know, too, that book-making is not the lucrative trade in this country that it is in our own."

"Ours may be called a labour of love, as it produces neither money nor fame. How many men of talent in India have spent their lives in the prosecution of knowledge and Oriental learning, and have dropped into the grave without one word of record or of praise! The literary labours of men in Europe have little in common with us; in this distant field the pursuit of Oriental literature cuts a man off from the correspondence of the *savans* of our own country, as also from the hope of fame or emolument. Those who have laboured to clear a path

through the intricacies of the various languages of the East—who have, at an enormous sacrifice of private fortune, health, and even life, toiled to provide the means of profitable study, are forgotten. I believe I may venture to say, without fear of contradiction, that the most useful works in all the different branches of Oriental literature, Hindoo and Mohammedan law not excepted, are from the pens of Europeans, many of them acknowledged by the learned natives to excel in accuracy and extent the works of their own scholars."

"It is a hard, though, I fear, a true statement," answered the doctor.

"Steady prosecution of a worthy object is undoubtedly a pleasure amid all the toil and discouragements which may attend it; and we have the satisfaction to think that our labours have not been in vain in the main object. We have not only laboured usefully in opening their literary stores to the natives themselves, but in providing tools to carry on the work. We have helped them to the fixed standard of a pointed language, or, I should rather say, languages, for what we have done in one we have done in many. I am not so enthusiastic as to believe that spreading knowledge over a country like India can be speedily accomplished; but we have made the natives feel the superiority of printed books over their inaccurate and expensive manuscripts; we have put knowledge within the reach of those who are not rich; we have even shown them a way to better their fortunes, while they benefit their country; and those whose names are unknown among the *literate* of Europe, and whose bones are mouldering in the dust, will yet be recognised by the natives of this country as benefactors, whose deeds shall live after them."

"I wish," said the doctor, warmly, "that there was any one willing and able to give the world a faithful record of the services of those whose talents have never been estimated but by a few literary friends, and two or three well-informed natives; and I wish that ye would just part with your Moonshies,* and Mollahs,† and Pundits‡ at once, and before many years go about I might have the satisfaction to see you in the Land o' Cakes, where I think ye have not yet been."

"It will not do, my good friend; the day is too far spent for me now to alter my plan; if I did 'resolve,' it would be but to 'resolve and die the same.' I could not remodel my habits if I would. I never was fond of money—perhaps I should say, careful of it; though, at the same time, I may say that I have never gone beyond my allowances. I have lived all my life in ease, and supported the dignity of my station in the eyes of the natives, which I certainly think is a duty every man owes to his country as well as to himself. I might, certainly, by rigid economy, amass a little money even now out-of my ample receipts, but what would it signify? With a little I could not do in Europe what I have been accustomed to do here. I am too old to begin life anew, so shall just jog on in the ease and abundance I have ever enjoyed, until I quit the stage, without changing the

* Moonshie—Hindustanee teacher.

† Mollah—learned Persian.

‡ Pundit—learned Hindoo.

scene. If I had been fortunately married—if I had a family to expect me, I could make an exertion for them; but I have none dependant upon me, therefore am at liberty to walk on my own way."

"Yes, all that may be unfortunately true for you and me; still, every Briton, wherever he spends his life, likes to close his eyes in his own land; and though it is not the lot of many, it is the prospect we all look to," answered the doctor.

"And there is reason and just feeling in the sentiment," said Mr Curzon; "and, had I my life to go over again, I would keep it in view; as it is, I am too much a citizen of the world to sacrifice the comfort of the remaining years of my life for the satisfaction of lying by my ancestors."

Mr. Curzon was, in his habits of life, sentiments, and feelings, exactly an "Old Indian"—what the youths of that time called a "regular Qui Hie." The quiet, unobtrusive kindness of his manners bore a stamp of the climate by which they had been formed: a climate which disposes people to think and to order for the comfort of their friends rather than to make personal exertion; liberal, gentlemanly, and friendly, unwilling to impose restraint upon others, or to submit to it himself, he received his friends into his family with sincere pleasure, but did not constrain them or himself by altering in the smallest particular his usual habits of life. He rarely made his appearance among them from breakfast until the hour of driving in the evening, as the time not spent in public business was given to his literary pursuits.

Dr. McAlpin and he sat up until the extinction of the lights in the lower rooms round the square, and the glimmering of the nightlamps in the upper chambers, warned them that the world had retired to rest; a fact to which the "burning" out of their own cocoanut oil wall-shades, and the loud snoring of their bearers waiting in the outer rooms, bore testimony.

After breakfast next morning, the doctor's first care was to take the necessary steps for securing his passage; but, after going in his palanquin all over Calcutta, to the Exchange, and the Cooly Bazar, he had not been able to arrange anything to his satisfaction.

The "Lady Juliana" had very fine accommodation, but Captain Seabreeze was generally supposed "to sail too near the wind"—that is to say, kept a miserable table; so that the doctor, to whom good fare was not altogether indifferent, and who could not have contented himself with exactly the same cheer as when he came out, found it needless to inquire farther; though in his medical capacity he sometimes decried upon the advantage of spare living, he was not overfond of reducing the thing to practice, at least for four or five months upon a stretch. The doctor perfectly well knew the difference between prescribing and taking prescriptions: not that we wish to insinuate that our worthy friend was either a gourmand or an epicure, nor yet that happy compound of both, which men sometimes like even to affect, as a proof that they have lived where such things are to be learned.

—The "Carlisle Castle" was unexceptionable, but she was full. A lack and twenty thou-

sand rupees in passage-money; the "Patriot" was a fine ship, and had an excellent table; but Captain Ropesend was a tyrant, not only among his ship's company, but his passengers, and no one would sail with him but those who could not do better.

When the doctor represented all this to Mr. Curzon in the evening, as they were walking in the veranda, until the phaeton for their evening drive was brought to the door, Mr. Curzon told him that he expected a captain of an Indiaman to dine with him that night, who could perhaps accommodate him, or, at all events, give him useful information.

"I dinna want to wait for the last ships of the season," said the doctor; "if we have foul weather off the Cape or a long voyage, I should not be able to get to Scotland this winter, and that would not do for me, though I have written to my niece, who is my name daughter, to be at Fernbraes to meet me."

"I do not know when the 'Snowdon' sails, but Captain Landless will be able to tell you. I wish, since you are to go, that you may go with him. A better seaman never trod the deck; he is not one of those who have two characters, one for sea and another for shore. As you see him to-night, you will always find him if you sail with him. Have you any objection to go with me to Fort William?" continued Mr. Curzon. "I wish to inquire about a youth who has brought me a letter of introduction from England. Foolish boy, he ought to have delivered it himself. Afterward I can show you some of the changes which have taken place since we landed."

"With all my heart, I desire nothing better," said the doctor, who preceded his friend down stairs. When they were both seated in the high phaeton, which Mr. Curzon liked, because it carried them out of the dust, he called to his sirdar* bearer to bring the letter which he had left open on his dressing-table, as there was neither card or address sent with it, and he wanted it for the name. They drove down "the Cowtess," which, as they were out half an hour before the usual time, was only occupied by a battalion of bhisties,† marching ten or twelve feet abreast, in the act of watering it from the necks of their bhisty-bags, formed of the skins of small bullocks, and slung over the right shoulder in a way, when filled out with water, very much to resemble the animal from which they were taken.

Our friends entered the fort by the Chowringhee gateway, and drove straight through it, passed the European parade and governor's house, usually occupied by the adjutant-general of the king's troops, to the south barracks, where Mr. Curzon knew he would most probably find the newly-arrived cadets. He asked the first sentry he met for the quarters of "Cadet Morton Sabib" without receiving a satisfactory answer; but, on making him comprehend that it was one of the "little new-come gentlemen" he wanted, the sentry directed him to the farther end of the barracks, saying, "All the little gentlemen are there."

Mr. Curzon threw the reins to one of his sices,‡ and with the doctor walked up stairs into

* Sirdar—head bearer.

† Bhisty—water-carrier.

‡ Sice—groom.

a long passage which extends through the centre, from one end of the barracks to the other, having staircases and entrances at both ends. Into this passage all the apartments on both sides open, and Mr. Curzon, seeing a young gentleman coming out of one of them, went forward to him, and begged to be directed to that occupied by Mr. Morton.

"Mr. Morton, sir?" said the youth, in an accent of surprise. "You do not mean young Morton who came out with us?"

"The same, sir, I suppose," answered Mr. Curzon. "I seek Mr. Morton who left England with the June fleet."

"He was in that room," pointing across the passage; "but I am sorry to tell you, sir," he went on, after a little hesitation, "he died last night, and was buried this morning."

The doctor, who had not taken part in the conversation, now came anxiously forward.

"Impossible!" answered Mr. Curzon; "there must be some mistake; I had a letter of introduction brought by the Morton I mean, delivered this afternoon."

"I can explain that circumstance, sir, if you will walk into my room." He turned the lock which was in his hand, and both gentlemen entered with him. The youth placed two chairs, all his quarters afforded, but his guests were too painfully interested to occupy them.

"But the letter?" asked Mr. Curzon.

"After all was over this morning, at six o'clock, poor Morton's desk was opened by the barrack-master, in the presence of the proper people; a number of sealed letters were found in it, which were sent according to the addressees, and I suppose, sir, yours was one of the number."

"Why was it not sent before? When did you arrive?" asked Mr. Curzon.

"We have been here a week this day," returned the youth.

"How unfortunate that I did not sooner receive that letter. This untimely catastrophe might have been prevented," said Mr. Curzon.

"You knew the young man, sir," inquired the doctor; "what was his illness, and what brought it on?"

"The sun, they said, sir; he had been ill the whole night before any of us knew; indeed, I only discovered it the day before yesterday, when I went into his room by chance. There was but a bearer with him in the night, who could not speak a word of English, nor we of Hindostanee. It was the middle of the day when I went to him, and found him very ill in bed and very hot, with the sun shining in upon him, which the doctor afterward said was bad. He complained of thirst, and I gave him Madeira and water as much as he could drink."

The two gentlemen, who were eagerly listening to this recital, exchanged a glance; but it would have been cruel, because unavailing, in such circumstances to have told the speaker of the mischief he had done: they let him proceed.

"Though he was certainly very ill, I did not know that there was the least danger. I had never been with sick people, and I did not know that young men could die without being long ill first."

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Curzon.

"Poor boy!" said the doctor; "his life has been the sacrifice of inexperience and want of

attention. But when did medical assistance come?"

"That I cannot precisely say, sir. I stayed with him until tiffin, and, finding that he could not eat anything, and had become extremely restless and uneasy, I was fortunate enough to meet with a man who spoke a little English, and directed me to the doctor's quarters. When I got there, I made out, as well as I could understand his people, that he had gone over the plain to the general hospital, and I went into his house and wrote a note, which I desired them to take to him, as I was obliged to be in town on business at a precise hour, and I never thought that there was anything more the matter with Morton than a little heat from being too much in the sun the day before. I was detained to dinner by the captain we came out with, and when I came back here at night I found the garrison-surgeon, but he told me that there was no need for him to stay longer—that he could be of no use. I was greatly shocked and surprised, and I tried to persuade him to stay; but he said he had other business to do, and, as he could do nothing for him, there was no necessity for his staying to see a man die. I remained by poor Morton, who was quite delirious, until he breathed his last, and I do not think I ever suffered so much in my life before."

"I believe it, my young friend, I believe it," said Dr. M'Alpin. "I wish I had been with you four-and-twenty hours sooner, and it might have been spared."

"It is doubly distressing to me," said Mr. Curzon. "Poor boy! he was recommended to my care by an old friend, and, had the letter been delivered, he would have been in my house, and this might not have happened—but why were the letters not sent?"

"To confess the truth, sir, we all acted foolishly in that respect. One of the cadets who came before us, told us that it would be of no use. He gave us a history of the receptions he had met with, and out of nineteen letters which he presented, he never had but one invitation to a great dinner, where hardly any one spoke a word to him, or took any more notice of him than if he had not been present; and we were foolish enough, sir, to be guided by his advice, and some of us tore our letters, and others resolved never to deliver them."

"And the cadet who gave you this advice," inquired Mr. Curzon, "may I ask what sort of education and manners he possesses?"

"To say the truth, sir, not much of either. He is rather a rough fellow, just from school."

"There it is," answered Mr. Curzon. "I thought there must be something in himself, since he met with general neglect. A youth such as you describe could not be a desirable addition to any family. Depend upon it, that when people in this country have reason to complain of hospitality, the fault is generally in themselves."

"Experience is a stern master, my young friend," said Dr. M'Alpin; "and I hope he has taught you not to set lightly by the care and trouble of your kind parents another time, and not to destroy, for the opinion of an ignorant youngster, what has cost them, it may be, trouble to procure, and what they laid stress upon as being of service to you when you were out of their sight."

The boy blushed, and the doctor continued kindly, "I did not mean to scold you, young man; but take my advice," and he offered his hand, which the other took with cordiality, "and dinna reject acquaintance with those who have more years on their shoulders, and more experience to guide them."

"What has passed shows me that we have done wrong," said the boy, with manly frankness, which pleased both gentlemen, well knowing the difficulty those of his age usually have in confessing an error, and the pride they too often feel in rather standing by the consequences of their own free-will actions, than submitting to correct them by the opinion of those whom they too often suppose to have lost the fire of youth and the pride of independence.

"It will give me pleasure, sir," said Mr. Curzon: "may I request your name?"

"Ouseley, sir—Charles Ouseley."

"It will give me pleasure, Mr. Ouseley, if you will make my house your home while you remain at the presidency."

"I am exceedingly obliged, sir—nothing could give me greater pleasure—but I do not know if I am permitted to be absent from the fort."

"I shall settle all that for you. I'll put you in the way of transacting the matter according to rule. Have you any conveyance?"

"Yes, sir, I have a horse; the first thing I did was to buy a horse."

"Then I shall leave one of my sices to conduct you to my house. Here is my card; you cannot miss your way. Do you know Tank Square? But stay—I had forgotten your baggage."

He looked round the apartment, which contained a small wicker-bottomed cot (without moscheto curtains), furnished with a mattress and pillows, covered with a sheet and Madras palampore. A camp-table of two leaves on a folding stand, on which was a uniform jacket, just come home from the tailor; scarlet cloth; gold epaulets; silk stockings, which seemed to have been rummaged out of their European packing-cases; ink in a coffee-cup, wafers in a pillbox, pens and paper. Trunks placed upon each other were made to perform the office of a dressing-table, by which stood a large brass chillumchee* and black earthen goglet. Four chairs completed the furniture, one of which was occupied by a saddle, and the other by sundry pairs of boots and shoes, leaving only two disposable.

A regulation-sword hung from one of the nooks for wall-shades on the wall; a shotbag and pistols occupied two more; and from the fourth depended a kind of flat fishing-basket, out of which projected a flute and some torn music. The floor was littered with the usual store of useless, nameless, indescribable trumpery, which is so often furnished to young gentlemen as indispensable, and which, after costing a large sum to their parents, leaves them, on their arrival, in want of every serviceable article.

"Have you any trustworthy servant? but it is impossible you can have," said Mr. Curzon, recollecting himself. "If you will put up those things," looking at the mass upon the table, "I shall order proper people to be sent to carry them to my house."

* Chillumchee—large basin.

"I cannot think of giving you that trouble, sir; I have a very good, useful servant, who speaks English, and whom I can get to understand me—but here he is."

A dirty, disorderly-looking kitmutgar,* while his master was speaking, came into the room with his shoes on his feet; he, however, instantly returned, and left them at the door, when he perceived that his master's guests were not "*new little sahibs*." He had on his head a soiled pink cotton turban, placed on one side; his thick, coarse black hair hung from the crown of his head, and was cut straight across the back of his neck; his white cotton coat and trousers were both coarse and ragged, and his sash was of common coarse cloth, dyed orange. His large, hooked nose, and thick, bushy black eyebrows, gave his face altogether the appearance of roguery and assurance which characterizes the knavish and dissipated race of Mussulmans, well known in Calcutta by the name of "king's officers' servants;" that is to say, the entirely worthless part of the community, who take casual service with officers belonging to the ships and European regiments, resolved to make the most of their short time, and commonly ending by robbing their masters on the eve of departure. "Call my servant," said Mr. Curzon to the kitmutgar.

"It is done, sahib," and he left the room.

"That fellow would never do," continued Mr. Curzon. "You would lose your baggage, Mr. Ouseley, if you trusted it out of your sight in his care."

"Your sircar furnished you with that account-drel?" said the doctor.

"Yes, sir; but I have never had any reason to complain of him."

"No! though he came into the room where you were with his shoes on. If he had not quickly got rid of them, I should have pitched him out of that window for his insolence. Heard ever anybody of a footman in our country coming into a room with a hat on his head, or a decent Mussulman with his shoes on his feet?"

"It is not," said Mr. Curzon, seeing that Mr. Ouseley did not understand what could so highly have excited the doctor's wrath, "it is not the mere circumstance of a man's coming into a room with his shoes on that is the cause of offence, but the intention with which it is done. He knows perfectly well that he is putting upon you the greatest affront that a servant can offer to his master, and taking a liberty which he dare not with the lowest native. I mention this because it is proper that Europeans should know what natives consider as respectful and disrespectful; they seldom fail in their duties in that way when they see that we know what they ought to do; and, indeed, respectable servants never do so at any time."

"You will think I am giving you a hard lesson, Mr. Ouseley," joined the doctor; "but in this country, when you choose a new servant, always choose a clean and well-dressed man. Gambling and drunkenness are almost always the cause of dirt and rage. A proper man has too much self-respect ever to be seen without proper covering."

Mr. Curzon told his new acquaintance that he

* Kitmutgar—servant who waits at table.

would expect him to dinner at half past seven ; in the mean time he promised to send one of his own chapsrasseys* to see that the baggage was properly taken care of, and left him for the present.

CHAPTER III.

" Ah! how changed the times to come!
Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild wandering roam,
Though rigid law cries out 'twas just!"

When Mr. Curzon and Dr. McAlpin were re-seated in the phaeton, the conversation naturally turned upon the lamentable event which had just come to their knowledge.

" It is much to be regretted," said Mr. Curzon, " that parents at home generally know little of how their sons are situated when they come to this country. Here is another instance among the many I have met with, of these poor boys falling a sacrifice to their own inexperience; and the climate gets the whole credit, when only half is due. Yet what can be done to prevent it! A man's fate must always be, in a measure, in his own hands; the anxiety of parents or the providence of the legislature cannot make provision against the thoughtlessness and presumption of their years. It is almost impossible to keep a great schoolboy, wearied with having nothing to do, and often unprovided with any rational pursuit, within doors for a whole long day.

" Ay, ay," answered the doctor, " people at home often think that if a youth is idle and expensive, and will not settle to any business, he will do well enough for India. And, if the truth were known, man or woman need to have industry that never will relax, and courage that no climate will subdue, to do any good here. Oh, if they would but consider what a young man is to do with himself from five in the morning, his parade time, until six in the evening, when he may go out with safety, or how he is to pass over so many dull, hot hours, in quarters by himself, without getting into one folly or another, they would take more pains than they sometimes do to fit them for the scene they are to act in; and, instead of sending those that have but little education, they would, at least, strive to give every one some fixed pursuit. Health is compounded of many things, and among them the employment of the mind, Curzon, is not the least important."

" These ideas are too philosophic to be generally acted upon in our expensive country; friends are glad to find a situation fit for a younger son, without too scrupulously considering whether he be fit for it. Every man sent to this country is provided for; the service is sure; he rises if he lives, and if he does not, he does not require it. It may be that many letters are presented which are but of little use to the bearers; but when that is the case, it may be traced with few exceptions, I fancy, to the way in which they are procured, and the manners of the youth who delivers them. Friends and parents at home ask letters from those with whom they have little acquaintance, and send raw, unedu-

cated schoolboys to present them, who in many cases cannot be pleasant guests in any house; so that, perhaps, the formal invitation to dine, which young Ouseley mentioned, or the general invitation to come at any time, which is only understood by those acquainted with the manners of the country, is all the fruit of it. The climate, the occupations of the day, languor of mind, the concomitant of both, and the driving-hour, being generally all that men in public life have for the enjoyment of family intercourse, prevent them taking the trouble of going to see how these poor boys get on in the fort, and their situation is often deplorable when they are left to themselves."

" Yes," said the doctor; " and, like this poor boy, they often make quick work of it. You will find fifty, ay, a hundred deaths among the cadets for one among the young ladies; and the reason is, that the last are under the advice and direction of others, while the first are left to their own. They run about in the heat of the day, all over the place, drink Madeira and water, try their dogs and horses in the sun, and a thousand follies of the same kind. A man need have a constitution of iron to go through with it. There is many a dear bargain in this world, Curzon, but experience is the dearest of all. We must of us act first, and think how we ought to have done afterward; and seldom, very seldom, any experience can serve us but that which we have purchased for ourselves. We may give our heirs all that we possess in the world, but we can never give them our experience."

Mr. Curzon had stayed so long in the fort that he had not time, even if he had inclination, to show his friends the changes he had talked of. They were both too much accustomed to the striking events brought forward by a resistless climate, to feel that which had just passed as they would have done years before; still it was of a nature which made a solitary drive the most agreeable, and they took the Raussipuglah road, which brought a change of a different kind before them. Mr. Curzon pointed out to his friend several houses of no great distance from each other, some of them handsome, and others indifferent, the abodes of the Mysore princes.

" There," he said, " dwell the family of Tippoo Sultan; they have been here ever since the capture of Seringapatam. At the time they came, there was an allowance assigned for the support of each—five thousand rupees a month, I believe—which it has been the policy of the company not to increase with their increasing families. There are now only two of Tippoo's sons in life, but their descendants have multiplied to such a number, that they must soon either starve, or seek service in Calcutta. It is difficult to find employment for Mussulmans of their rank when the sword is forbidden."

" The sins of the fathers have been visited upon the children here," said the doctor. " If Hyder Ally usurped the throne of his benefactor, they have suffered for it root and branch; we might grieve for the overturn of a royal house, if we did not know that some of these poor creatures are better here than if their family still filled the Musnud* of the Mysore. You know as well as I do, that in Mussulman courts the

* Chapsrassey—running footman.

* Musnud—throne.

other brothers are almost always sacrificed to him who, by his father's caprice or his own boldness, is placed on the throne; and if their eyes are not put out, they are fed on opium until they take their departure more quietly. I know enough of those things."

"The Hindoo law of inheritance has certainly much the advantage over Mohammed's, and does not leave a whole family at the mercy of a jealous tyrant, who commonly adopts the maxim that 'his throne stands most secure when its feet are wet in blood.'"

"Ay, ay," returned the doctor, "cruelty and profligacy often go together. I have remarked that, when pleasure is the business of life, cruelty becomes its amusement. The mind, sunk and exhausted by excess, can only be stimulated by sights of blood and suffering."

It had become almost dark before Mr. Curzon turned his horses' heads to retrace his steps; when they reached his own house, he found that his new acquaintance, Mr. Ouseley and Captain Landless, were in the drawing-room. After having introduced his friend Dr. M'Alpin to the latter, he good-naturedly entered into conversation with his young guest, who, in the pride and pleasure of finding himself in his new uniform for the first time, had already forgotten whatever had distressed him. Notwithstanding the mobility of his temper, Mr. Curzon agreed in thought to what the doctor had already observed, that "there was making in him when a few more years had gone over his head." He had not then completed his sixteenth year—an early age to be launched in the world, left to shape his own course, amid pitfalls as thick as those seen by Mirza, in his celebrated vision, at the entrance of the bridge of human life.

Mr. Curzon, in consequence of the untimely fate of the youth who had been recommended to his care, felt a double interest in one who seemed to be cast upon his protection; and, after he had seriously advised him against needless exposure in the sun, and inconsiderate expense, he ended by saying, "Make yourself quite at home here, Mr. Ouseley. You will always find breakfast on the table at seven, tiffin at one, and dinner at half past seven, whether I am at home or not. My people will get you all the servants you require while you are here. If you wish to go out, you have only to give the order, and my sirdar bearer, who is always in the house, will provide you with conveyance."

"I really do not know, sir, how to express my sense of all your goodness!"

"Well, do not try; but show it by taking care of yourself until you are sufficiently acquainted with the country to know what you may, and what you may not do."

During this time Dr. M'Alpin and Captain Landless had been walking in the veranda and settling their own affairs. Captain Landless was stout, not tall, with rather a short neck, ruddy, cheerful countenance, and dark, sharp eyes, shaded by thick, black eyebrows. He spoke in a loud, decided, though not disagreeable tone of voice, which strengthened the general impression made by his manners, that he was as prompt in action as resolute in time of danger. Dr. M'Alpin was prepossessed in his favour from the first moment of his introduction, and was actually disposed to be persuaded by Captain

Landless to go home with him in the *Snowdon*, though he was to go "by the way of China."

"If a longer voyage does not make any material difference to you, sir, I would advise your going to China with me. I can give you elegant accommodation. You shall have the starboard side of the roundhouse, and, as we sail directly, may probably be in England as soon as the ships which leave the sandheads next month. With us you will have plenty of elbow-room, and be free from the noise of children, which, as you have none of your own, is perhaps not a pleasure to you."

"No, certainly," answered the doctor; "give me elbow-room and quiet; but your table, captain—as you have no passengers—how stands that?"

"As my outward-bound voyage was for Bengal and China, I was full of passengers, and have abundance of stores, and a good milk cow."

"That being the case, I do not see why I should not go with you; but here are the consummah's* joined hands, to say that dinner is on the table."

Before it was finished, Dr. M'Alpin had determined to take his passage in the *Snowdon*; and, that important point settled, his first care in the morning was to push his preparations forward with all speed. At the end of a week he received a letter from Lucknow which gave him serious uneasiness; his friend Colonel Cheapstow had another attack of his old complaint, the liver, and bitterly regretted his absence from the station, and seemed to think himself not at all safe in the hands of his successor.

While the doctor was vexing himself over this letter, one of Mr. Curzon's chaprasseys came in to tell him that a musalgiet was very ill in the bottle caannah,† and that his master would be glad if he could do him any good.

The doctor went instantly to the poor creature, and found him suffering agonies from the rough treatment he had met with from a native practitioner, who had given his attendance while there was a rupee to be got, and now that he had fleeced his poor patient to the last anna,‡ left him. His wrists, ankles, and temples were strongly bound with cord, "to prevent the pulse from beating so fast," and his stomach miserably cauterized with a hot iron, "to extract the heat."

Notwithstanding the state to which these remedies had reduced the sufferer, he gradually recovered under Dr. M'Alpin's care, who, as he said, often found that a little feeding did as much for the natives as medicine, particularly after they had been for several days submitted to the Sangrado system of hot water for their only nourishment, of which their own empirics are so fond.

"These fevers are the daily fruit of the grogshops," said Mr. Curzon, when the doctor recounted to him all that had passed. "The reformers of public morals have need to look to the grogshops; they are a nuisance of our introduction. The owners pay a rupee a day for

* Consummah—butter and house-steward.

† Musalgies—servants who clean the knives and forks, and run with lanterns before palanquins and carriages.

‡ Caannah—pantry; literally, a place to keep bottles.

§ Anna—small coin, sixteenth part of a rupee.

permission to sell spirits, and if they go on to license them in Calcutta, as has lately been done, we shall not have a respectable servant in our houses. Nothing corrupts our Mussulman attendants like those haunts of gambling and schools of theft. A man can procure drink for any article which he chooses to take from his master's house. We undo with one hand what we do with the other: what signify our schools, if we suffer any collector to increase the revenue by such detestable means. I remember the time when there was no such thing. You will find now, all round Calcutta, that, wherever a gentleman's house is situated, a grogshop starts up beyond his garden-wall to debauch his servants; and when you consider that a man can completely intoxicate himself for twopence, or perhaps half of it, it is easy to imagine what the trade must be which enables these wretches to pay a rupee a day for their license. I am angry with them, for they have lost me as good a servant as I ever had in my house: a young lad who had grown up with me. I saw him change under my own eye, every day becoming drier and blacker. From being stout, well-dressed, respectful, and attentive, he grew dirty and negligent. I did not discover the cause until it was too late to save him; he fell a victim to opium and toddy. But I had almost forgotten to ask you if you will cross the river with me this afternoon. I have a little business with Ascot, whom I think you knew up the country."

"Yes, I remember him very well," said the doctor; "we may as well cross over to his place as go anywhere else. He is married, I believe, since I saw him, and I heard his lot is not the most fortunate."

"I believe there may be something of that kind," answered Mr. Curzon, "though I really do not know. I have never seen him since I left the upper provinces. He married, I think, a country-born Dutchwoman, who, I believe, does not speak much English, and, in consequence, has fallen out of European society. They have just come down the country, so I do not know very much about them. We may as well take young Ouseley with us."

CHAPTER IV.

"Now Bell my wife, she lo'es no strife,
But she would guide me e'en she can,
So to maintain an easy life,
I oft maun yield, tho' I'm gudeman."

OLD SONG.

At the usual hour in the evening, the three gentlemen proceeded together in their palanquins to the Old Fort Ghaut, as had been previously determined, where their boat was in readiness. "Well, well," said the doctor, looking at the new buildings within the old walls, as he stood waiting for the dandies* to place a plank from the steps to the boat, "the ship-people will doubtless think our new custom-house a great improvement, though the antiquarians may regret the demolition of the 'Old Fort' and the 'Black Hole;' ours is the age of reason, when nothing is sacrificed to memory."

"I thought with you, my friend," answered Mr.

* Dandies—boatmen.

Curzon, "when I saw the work of destruction going on; it was, perhaps, as laborious as the original construction had been; the ramparts were of immense thickness, and so consolidated by time that to remove them seemed like quarrying the solid rock. That memorial of our suffering is gone from the earth, with the pillar which recorded it; and I must always regret the destruction of an historic monument."

The palanquins were left in waiting on the opposite bank, and, as the house to which they were going stood close to the river, they ordered the boatmen to land them at Mr. Ascot's Ghaut, and walked up under the shade of the bearers' chatahs.* The first view of the mansion gave them a perfect idea of its inhabitants. It was large, and would have been handsome, had it not been quite surrounded and disfigured by a deep choppert veranda, closed into different divisions by green cheeks,† purdahs,‡ and matting, giving it altogether a patched and ragged appearance. When they drew near they were warned what sort of inmates tenanted these compartments, by the chattering of monkeys, screaming of parquets, boobies, minahs, &c. "Quite a native establishment," said Mr. Curzon.

"Hoot," said the doctor, "what could tempt Ascot to such a step as this?"

"Money—and if he has got it, dearly has he gained it. The father-in-law had an immense fortune, and Ascot an equally great talent for spending."

By this time they had reached the front veranda; the bearer drew up a check to admit them, and they were ushered into a very large hall, which extended through the centre of the house. The doors and windows were all shut round and round, and the outworks with which it was externally garnished rendered the apartment so dark, that the visitors stood for a moment looking about before they discovered Mr. Ascot moving in the gloom to welcome them.

He took the tone of an old friend, perhaps charmed to see any one he had ever seen before come to him in his solitude. "Ah! Curzon, how do you do—and my friend from Lucknow too; I did not look to see you here." He bowed to the stranger whom Mr. Curzon presented.

"Mrs. Ascot," he called as if speaking to some one in the room, though there was nobody visible, "come here; I wish to introduce you to my friends."

No answer was returned, but they heard a sort of shuffling on the mat.

The guests had now begun to recover the use of their vision, which, dazzled by the external light, had left them upon coming into this gloomy abode, and they could distinguish, amid other objects, a large folding screen at the farther end of the apartment, from which proceeded a scratching noise as Mr. Ascot called upon his wife; but no lady appeared.

"My wife is no great walker," he said, speaking to his visitors, "but I am sure she is here; and, if she will not come to us, we must go to her."

He led the way, and, sure enough, in the intricacies of the screen the lady was discovered, seated in a large wicker chair, in the midst of four slave girls, who, squatted on the floor, were at

* Chatah—large umbrella.

† Choppert—thatched veranda.

‡ Cheeks—large blinds constructed of small reeds.

§ Purdahs—screens.

work around her. The noise proceeded from the scratching together their baskets and bundles, and as soon as the visitors appeared they arose and decamped. These poor creatures are sometimes bought by country-born families, of wandering Arabs, who, contrary to British law, hawk about unfortunate children for sale. Foreigners also, who usually prefer economy to propriety in their domestic establishments, choose slaves in preference to native servants, as they have no caste, and are, in fact, servants of all work, kept at the slight expense of poor food and coarse clothing. Mrs. Ascot had hers instructed in needlework by her durzee,* and, as she never did anything in that way herself, she had the more leisure to keep them busily employed.

Mrs. Ascot, seeing strangers, rose, and, without courtesying, bent her head, which she repeated again and again as her husband introduced her visitors, much in the manner of the Chinese porcelain figures, which continue to wave their heads backward and forward when they are once set in motion. This ceremony gave the guests time to remark the figure before them, which was exceedingly fat, and very dark. Her garb was a white muslin robe, made like a very large chemise, tied full round the neck, and again confined by a yellow ribband round a waist of the largest size; short, tight sleeves, which left the whole of the fat, black arms, without gloves, in view. Her face was a regular oval in form, and, on the whole, rather handsome. She wore her hair divided in the centre, and braided back smooth behind her ears. Whimsically placed on the top of her head was a silk cap, something between flesh and salmon colour, stuck full of silver flowers. On her feet blue silk shoes, with toes sharp as needles, showing that she drew her ornamental apparel rather from her store-trunks than any modern repository. She carried a Chinese painted fan in her hand, which she waved in accordance with every movement of her head.

"I never sits in that large hall, because take cold without screen," said Mrs. Ascot to Mr. Curzon, as an apology for not coming when she was called.

"Yes," joined her husband, "she sits so constantly in her own rooms with those slave-girls, that she thinks a breath of air is to kill her."

"You loves so much airs, and so much lights, and so many noise, that my poor eyes ache, and my head ache, and I altogether ache."

"If the screaming of birds and beasts, and the infernal chattering of slave-girls and monkeys, can give headaches, no one need want them in this house."

"You hear for him, Mr. Curzon, how he make scold to me, and all for my poor dumb brutes."

Both their visitors had seen and heard scenes of this kind before, therefore did not waste their sympathy upon those who seemed equally insensible of the misery or ridicule of their own situation. Mr. Ouseley, to whom the whole was perfectly new, gazed with wonder alternately upon the interlocutors and the friends with whom he came.

"If all my torments deserved the title of dumb brutes," said Mr. Ascot, politely, "I would have more peace in my own house. You will think mine an odd complaint, doctor—I never have company or quiet; but, to state the case—my

wife rises at five in the morning, but she is not out of her room till twelve, and I have my solitary breakfast at eight, while she is in her room airing bird of paradise plumes, and kincobs, and artificial flowers, and a thousand other things, of which she never makes any use, enough to set up a shop in the China bazar, and screaming with those slaves louder than the loories in the veranda."

"Things I not make any use," answered his lady, reproachfully; "when you want some cloths—when children want—I go to large chest, take out—not like other ladies, send to bazar—buy—buy—I take good bargain, and keep all to ready."

"Yes, for the sake of a rupee on a piece of cloth, you make me carry them all over the country, and make me pay ten times as much as they are worth. Was I not obliged to buy six more camels to carry your trumpery down here?"

"You hear to him, Mr. Curzon—a company's servant speak like a little Admy.* All great ladies plenty things get, and why not me?"

"Surely, Ascot," said Mr. Curzon, not knowing what else to say to satisfy the appellant, "you cannot expect to travel so lightly now as when you were a bachelor."

"No, certainly, with a wife, eight children, four slaves, five ayahs,† more birds and beasts than were ever in the ark, with their boxes and cages, to say nothing of handboxes, patarrahs,‡ and lackered trunks, and camphor trunks, and all sorts of trunks. My wife never eats any but turkey's eggs at breakfast, and we have coops for them to lay in fastened on the back of the camels: you may say I do not travel light!"

"But, though you have eight children," said Mr. Curzon, going back to the first articles in the list of heavy baggage, "they are not all here with you; you have sent the eldest home long ago."

"And what you call home?" inquired Mrs. Ascot. "This home for me; I not part with my children, not never."

"Persuade her to that, if you can," answered her husband; "I have tried to do it until I am weary; she falls into fits whenever I propose it, though the creatures are growing up wild: Louisa is eleven years old, and can neither read nor write."

"And what signify? You know I not read—write, and you many time tell to my papa, before you make marriage to me, I much better than Europe's ladies, spends all time to read—write."

Something like a blush passed over her husband's face at this avowal. Young Ouseley could hardly smother his inclination to laughter, nor the doctor suppress his desire to tell Mr. Ascot what he thought of his whole conduct.

"You have more to do, I dare say, Mrs. Ascot, than to have time for such things," answered Mr. Curzon, willing to make an effort in a way likely to affect his hearer for the little sufferers; "but your children—children of their rank are always sent to England, and your boys cannot come into the service unless they have been brought up in England."

"Very well; Mr. Ascot send boys he please, but I keep girls to me. Rain come! rain come! Ascot, make for bearers shut down purdahs all round! my poor loories! my jacks!"

* Admy—being, literally, a descendant of Adam.

† Ayahs—waiting-women.

‡ Patarrahs—covered baskets.

* Durzee—tailor.

Mrs. Ascot got up as fast as she could waddle, and followed her husband, whom she sent off first as a light courier, to collect the servants for the protection of the chattering multitude without, who screamed and clamoured together as the wind overturned them and their dwellings.

"How unlucky this is!" said Mr. Curzon, as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Ascot were out of hearing; "here we shall be detained for another hour, at least; it is impossible to cross the river in such weather."

"I would rather be wet to the skin than in the hearing of such outrageous folly," answered the doctor, "in a place without air or light; but I will let in both, come of it what will." He opened the northern doors, and in an instant effected his purpose, the northwester circulating a new atmosphere.

While he was standing at the door to enjoy it, a child's carriage of very large dimensions, drawn by two immense red Guzerat bullocks (with large black humps and tails), trotted up to the door, and six of the before-mentioned eight children (with two or three ayahs), got out of it, and rushed into the hall, followed by two well-grown boys, who had dismounted from their ponies at the same time.

The single article of dress worn by the girls was exactly in form and shape like their mother's nondescript robe, with the exception of its only having one fastening, at the neck, from which it flowed loose. Their dingy feet, without stockings, were thrust into red, yellow, and green slippers of "Chinamans'" manufacture. The boys also had a single article of clothing, which consisted of trousers and body in one piece, without sleeves.

When they had reconnoitred the strangers, and made a great many remarks on them in Hindostanee (though no entreaty of either Mr. Curzon or Dr. M'Alpin could induce them to advance or answer the questions which were asked), they set upon Mr. Ouseley, whom they called "the little sahib," and very soon possessed themselves of his sword and sash. In the midst of the uproar their father returned, and laughed immoderately at seeing his eldest boy buckle the sword-belt round his waist, and drag the sword after him along the floor, while one of his sisters, equipped in the sash, marched by his side. It was in vain that Mr. Ouseley attempted to speak to them: they did not understand one word of English.

"You will stay dinner with us?" said Mr. Ascot.

Mr. Curzon made an excuse. "We have a positive engagement."

"It is impossible to keep it—you cannot cross in such weather. It is now late, and dinner is just coming on the table."

Mr. Curzon, in pity to the family whom he saw growing up perfect natives, took the opportunity of their mother's absence to urge the necessity of sending them to Europe.

Mr. Ascot pleaded the impossibility of obtaining her consent.

"If that is the case, do not ask it; take their passage, and when the deed is done, necessity will reconcile her. You are sacrificing their wellbeing, body and mind, in every sense of the word, by keeping them here."

Mr. Ascot promised; whether he would hold that promise was another affair. He was a good-natured, indolent, unthinking man, whose first effort was to please a person whom it

was impossible to please, and whose caprices and exactions only multiplied by indulgence, and whose yoke he would have thrown off unless indolence had prevented him. He therefore took the middle course, and grumbled and obeyed, always complaining of the thralldom which he had not energy or perseverance to break.

They heard the twang of a Javanese harp, and the beating of a tom-tom* from Mrs. Ascot's side of the house.

"There she is," said her husband, "enjoying all the amusement she ever has any pleasure in, with the exception of the puppet-shows she often gets for the children, and delights in as much as they do. Those slaves make music enough to scare me out of the house, but their mistress has no greater enjoyment, when she is resting on her couch (for she never goes out), than to hear them, unless it may be to listen to the stories they tell."

The doctor watched the weather, but there seemed no prospect of the rain abating. "Saw ye ever the like of this?" he said to Ouseley, who had joined him in the veranda. "Here is a specimen of what a man may bring himself to, that I dare say ye little dreamed of."

"Never saw anything like it before; but why does the man suffer it?"

"Because he cannot help it. What could alter that woman? She has brought him an immense fortune, and has a right to dispose of some of it according to her own taste. Her father, as she told us, never taught her to read or write, so that in mind she is just on a par with her slaves, in whose company she seems so much to delight. I have seen in my life many a modification of her character, though not just so bad, because she seems, in addition to her want of education, naturally stupid; and, though education does do a good deal, nature must have her part."

The servants had by this time lighted the lamps; the rain still fell in torrents, and the weather-bound visitors saw no alternative from the discomfort of the offered dinner. The consumah entered at one door to announce it, and Mrs. Ascot at another. Mr. Curzon gave his hand to the lady of the mansion, and conducted her to table exactly in the same costume as he had first the honour to see her, with the addition, however, of two rows of splendid pearls round her neck, diamond earrings in her ears, a variety of bracelets on her wrists, and rings on her fingers.

The children, who had followed their mother from her apartment, advanced before the company into the dining-room, making a critical survey of every dish upon the table. One of them carried a silver handbasin, into which one of the little boys poured the contents of a large rose-water bottle, chased in beautiful gold filigree-work.

"Oh, you rogue! my rosewater for spoil," cried his mother, not displeased that her guests should have an opportunity of seeing some of her fine possessions.

The boy paid no attention to her admonitions in English or Hindostanee, but saying he was a bhisty, continued to sprinkle the rosewater all round the room.

"Louisa, Louisa!" she called to the eldest girl, "you make stop your brother!" The young lady was otherwise engaged, and took no notice of the direction.

* Tom-tom—drum.

At length, when they were seated at table, Mr. Curzon prepared to carve the roast turkey, to which Mrs. Ascot desired to be helped, as she said "she not any soup eat but mullagatane;" but, before he could put his fork into the bird, Miss Louisa, who had been hovering about, and watching her opportunity, seized it by the neck, and, as she said, made it jump over Mr. Curzon's arm, to the infinite delight of her brothers and sisters.

Their reasonable mother threw herself back in her chair in a convulsion of laughter, and Mr. Ouseley, encouraged by her example, gave vent to the like inclination, which he had been almost dying to indulge ever since he entered the house.

"The most extraordinary thing I ever saw in my life!" said the doctor.

"Your young lady has an active spirit, Ascot; she has not lost in that way by remaining so long in the country," said Mr. Curzon.

Mr. Ascot at first broke out in a tone of indignation; but, seeing his son and heir making faces over Mr. Curzon's shoulder, his short-lived anger died away in a burst of laughter.

The servants in waiting clapped their hands on their mouths to prevent an untimely explosion of their merriment, and knocked their heads together in their hurry to escape out into the veranda, where they could indulge it without offence; even the old bearer, pulling the punkah, was obliged to let the rope out of his hand with a jerk as he followed the infectious example.

The children, no doubt, greatly edified by the general mirth which they had excited, as soon as it was a little appeased, retired in whispering consultation to plan another attack.

"I beg your pardon, Curzon," said Mr. Ascot; "I am really sorry, M^r Alpin, that the bird you intended to be helped to should have flown away; but when I saw the faces that fellow was making, it was impossible for me to be angry; after all, it was but a funny trick, though we are the sufferers. Let me recommend this pillaw to you: we are famous for Hindostanee dishes in this house."

"My Louisa so droll girl—you laugh all day, Mr. Curzon, you see her tricks," said Mrs. Ascot, as the tears ran down her cheeks from the exertions she had just been making.

Mr. Ouseley's unfeigned participation with her had recommended him very much to Mrs. Ascot's notice, and she turned to ask him what her funny children had done with his sword and sash.

"Taken them to play with, madam, I suppose."

"Oh, not sword! not sword! I so fear for sword!" and, looking round, the dreaded weapon was discovered lying harmless on a side-table, where the little pickle had thrown it, to leave him in liberty for the intended felony. "Oh, there I see them!" cried the provident mother; she gave the order in Hindostanee to a servant, "take away Ouseley Sahib's sword, and hide it until the children are gone to bed."

The order was no sooner executed, and the sword and sash had been made over to Mr. Curzon's *chaj-rassey*, who deposited them with the palanquins, which he had sent a boatman to get for his master and his guests, than the unruly troop returned to the dining-room in quest of the missing articles. Perceiving that they were not to be found, they made a second attack upon the owner. Had he understood Master William's

reiterated questions, "Where is your sword?" "where have you put your sword?" he could not have given a satisfactory answer, as their removal had passed between Mrs. Ascot and her servants. The boy then asked his father, his mother, and all the servants in turn, from whom he received the same answer, "I don't know—who knows? Perhaps some jackal has run away with it."

Fatigued with finding his efforts ineffectual, he returned to Mr. Ouseley with no better success than at first; exasperated by such unusual contradiction to his wishes, the wellbred young heir walked round to the opposite side of the table, and, slyly putting his hand into a dish full of gravy, he seized one half of a dressed lamb's head, and threw it with such force at Mr. Ouseley that it hit him a blow on the breast, and covered his new uniform jacket with gravy. Exulting in the mischief he had committed, and the revenge he had taken, he fled with all speed.

Poor Mr. Ouseley coloured redder than his coat, but he suppressed his anger, and, bowing to Mrs. Ascot, he begged she would excuse his rising from table, while he called the assistance of the servants in the hall.

Mr. Ascot, who felt that this was too clumsy a joke, burst forth in violent anger.

"This is all your doing, Mrs. Ascot—this is your education—this is your bringing up of my children. That boy is worse than your Jacko: all your favourites become equally insupportable!"

"Who make noise now, Mr. Ascot? and all for poor senseless child's play. What he know of spoil coat? If coat spoil I scarlet cloth got, new coat can make for Ouseley Sahib."

This proposal was too much for the doctor; he could not help laughing in the midst of his wrath. Fortunately, the youth for whose benefit it was made was out of hearing.

"You are enough to drive a man mad," said her husband, half rising from his chair, and sitting down again in the same instant; "but it is my fault, and not yours, else you would not have the power to expose yourself and me in this manner. I do not know what apology to make for the occurrences of this evening," he continued, addressing his visitors; "but you see the misery I have heaped upon my own head, and I hope will excuse them."

"Transport the culprits—send them to England," said the doctor, "and think no more about it. As Ouseley is beginning his military life, he must expect harder knocks yet."

The lady, who had not the slightest idea that anything had taken place out of the common rules of society, wished to explain to Mr. Curzon all about the scarlet cloth of which she had talked.

He saw that, with her ideas upon "chutta sahibs," little gentlemen, and "burrow sahibs," great gentlemen, it would be utterly impossible to make her comprehend reason upon the subject, and he had no alternative but to tell her that Ouseley was the son of a burrow sahib, and the coat was of no consequence.

Satisfied upon this point, all the rest appeared to her of not the least importance, and she was quite assured that her guests would find the spirit of her children as entertaining as she did.

The doctor, when he saw that Mr. Ascot actually suffered from the effects of his own folly, let pity overcome his anger, and talked with him on

other subjects, for the time which civility obliged them to remain together.

As soon as it was possible after dinner, Mr. Curzon called for the palanquins, and took his departure; not, however, before Mrs. Ascot, with many bends of the head, "hoped he would soon return to spend such another agreeable day;" and finding that the doctor had succeeded in smoothing down her ruffled husband, she extended the same invitation to him, judiciously observing,

"Another time you come, teach me, doctor, how make Mr. Ascot well when he is muggra,* and I not have no more lambs' heads when Mr. Ouseley come."

"Incorrigible fool!" muttered her husband, as he walked into the veranda, calling for musalgies and lanterns.

Both the gentlemen, on parting with him, repeated their advice not to lose time in sending home his children.

When they were seated before their boat, Mr. Curzon said to his young friend, "I would have regretted having brought you here to-night and subjecting you to such impertinence, if I did not think it might be a serviceable lesson to you in your progress through life. I knew the man whose house we have just left, a gentlemanly, good kind of fellow, but idle and expensive. The consequence is what you see: he married that animal for her father's money; she has been the means of driving European society from his house; and, instead of raising her, he has sunk to her level. In this country, where the climate disposes to indolence, the most deteriorating principle of our nature, which, like a canker-worm, eats to the root of every excellence in human character, a man had need to seek all helps and appliances to boot to raise himself and to stimulate energy, rather than suffer himself, as poor Ascot has done, to fall into the dust."

"If I thought I could save those young creatures," said the doctor, "though I doubt with some of them it is too late, I would even bear the folly and vulgarity of that intolerable woman, and come back another day to see if Ascot has really kept his promise. What preserves *our* superiority of character and feeling in India but that we are all brought up Britons? It is our proud boast, that wherever our children are born, we send them home to be educated; we give them the sentiments, and the pride, and the independence of our natural character. Whereas, in all the Dutch, French, Portuguese, and other foreign settlements, they keep their children with them, and in two generations they are natives in their minds, if not in colour. We make healthy, vigorous settlements in India, carrying along with us the refinement, knowledge, and improvements of our mother-country; they establish colonies and dwindle into natives. You may well laugh at the idea, Ouseley, but when we took Java from the Dutch, our officers gave a ball, at which the Dutch ladies appeared adorned in splendid jewels, without stockings; and a slave-girl stood behind the chair of each in the ball-room, for fear that their diamonds should be stolen out of their hair."

"A friend of mine," said Mr. Curzon, "who was present at the aforesaid ball, and who likes a joke, told me that, perceiving three of the ancient circular mammas (who were quite weary of the unsubstantial entertainment of seeing

their daughters dance) leave the ballroom and make their way into the supper-room, to see what hope there was for them there, followed, and, calling for a bottle of brandy, helped them to a glass each, by which they were so much refreshed as to be able to wait in patience for the next act."

"And at an entertainment of the same kind in the Isle of France, after we took it from the French," rejoined the doctor, "the ladies emptied the contents of the dishes after supper into their pocket-handkerchiefs, and carried them home in their pockets, because—they liked bonbons: I mention that to you, Ouseley, as a proof of what a colony becomes. Do not fancy, though, that every woman who has the misfortune to be brought up in India is exactly upon a par with the specimen we had to-day; it must be confessed that she is something beyond the common rule. We keep up our intercourse with home by as regular an interchange of persons and things as is carried on by the coaches to and from the metropolis of Britain to the outskirts of the kingdom. There's not a book printed in *our* country that we have not here five months after it comes from the press; whereas, among foreigners, they know no more of what is doing in France or Holland than the inhabitants of the South Seas, unless it may be when a new functionary arrives among them once in ten years—to open their mouths in gaping wonder at the great things that have come to pass since they were last there."

CHAPTER V.

"Few moments are more pleasing than those in which the mind is concerting measures for a new undertaking."—JOHNSON.

THE doctor's preparations for his voyage were now almost completed; his sea-furniture was made, his trunks nearly packed, and the shawls and presents he intended for his friends at home carefully soldered down in their tin boxes. He was seated in the midst of them, surrounded by bearers in the act of packing; his hookah in his hand, from which he drew long whiffs as he poised his chair on the back legs, his own set out on a high morah;* a large table before him, covered with bills, accounts current, Europe letters, &c., among which his sircar was rummaging for something, which he at length drew out and began to read: "One list of master's necessities for Europe ship and Sangar passage-boat. All things for eat and drink master must take for passage-boat?" inquired the sircar.

An affirmative nod of the head desired him to go on.

"And how many servants master want for boat? Consumah—kitmutgar—bowberjeet—his mate—musalgie—bhistry—bearers?"

"Only the sirdar and his mate."

"Very well, sahib, I pay to rest, and let go—dobeet—istrie-wallah,† master not want—horses not want to boat, I think?"

"No, certainly."

"Hookahbardar‡ must go to Sangar; master can't do without;" he made a mark opposite to the man's name; "all other servants I think master pay up, and leave to Lucknow?"

Another affirmative nod.

* Morah—footstool.

† Bowberjee—cook.

‡ Dobeet—washerman.

§ Istrie-wallah—iron-man.

|| Hookahbardar—man who dresses the hookah.

* Muggra—sulky.

The sircar prided himself not a little on his perfect knowledge of English, which he always said "he could speak, write, like any sahib," and he stood with his inkhorn hanging from his sash, and his reed-pen sticking behind his ear from under his turban.

"Then master please, I read to list for ship," he said.

"One milk goat, will soon give kittens.

"To one jar of sable fishes for Kedgeree, to master's breakfast.

"To five hundred of pickled mangoe's fish roes.

"To six dozen of long gentleman's stockings.

"To Hoff's and Co.'s humps pickled.

"To one dozen of short gentleman's gloves.

"To making eight dozen fine-ruffled gentleman's shirts.

"To making eight dozen gulla-bands* for dit—dit—dit.

"To goose's puppies smoked."

The durwan's† bell rung, the gate opened, a carriage entered and rolled under the portico. Two chapsrassey with silver sticks were upon the back of it; the well-known crimson and gold liveries attracted the notice of the doctor's servants. "Our Colonel Sahib! Chipto Sahib!" screamed the whole party in concert, fluttering to the door, and salaaming to the floor before Colonel Cheapstow as he entered.

The doctor threw down his hookah, and rose to greet his friend. After mutual inquiries had passed, Colonel Cheapstow said, "You had no sooner left us at Lucknow, doctor, than I had such a smart attack of the enemy here," pressing his hand on his right side, "that Mrs. Cheapstow advised me not to lose an hour in taking my departure for Europe. You know we had intended to have done so next year; our preparations were in part made. I pressed the rest, and we arrived in Calcutta with the ebb tide."

"To take such accommodations as I can give you, I hope," said Mr. Curzon, who caught the last sentence as he entered the room.

"With pleasure, Curzon; nothing can give me more pleasure than to spend the little time I have to be in India under your roof. I have left Mrs. Cheapstow on board our boat, where she wishes to stay until the cool of the evening. At sunset I shall have the satisfaction of introducing her to you. I think we have not met since I became benedict."

"It is even so, Cheapstow; you may depend upon my doing all in my power to make your stay in Calcutta agreeable to your lady."

Satisfied from Colonel Cheapstow that he had benefited by the air of the river, Mr. Curzon left his friends, as business called him, telling the doctor to take care of the colonel, and saying to her husband that he hoped for the honour of Mrs. Cheapstow's company at dinner.

"I see you are far advanced," said Colonel Cheapstow, looking at the figure of the doctor's cabin, which was in exact form and dimensions chalked upon the floor, and in which was placed his sea-furniture, made to his own orders, every article precisely to fit the space for which it was intended.

"Yes, I think I shall not be ill off: walk into my cabin, colonel; here is my couch, and here is my post just by it, and here are my stern windows. Ye see I am well aired and well lighted."

"I wish we could go with you: what ship do you sail in?"

"The Snowdon; and if it is possible for you to be ready, it's a thing worth thinking about. By good luck, the captain is to call this morning—at this very hour," taking out his watch; "and you can settle with him about accommodation without loss of time."

Captain Landless kept his appointment, and Colonel Cheapstow's wish to be under the care of his trusty friend, Dr. M'Alpin, triumphed over all minor considerations, even the destination to China; and the business was soon settled to the satisfaction of both parties. He agreed to give ten thousand rupees for the other half of the round-house next the doctor's, and a small cabin for the colonel's dressing-room.

"We have abundance of Patna sheep and Chittagong fowls on board, fine pigs, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guinea-fowls; so that," said Captain Landless, "though we are not a large party, we shall not want for anything."

"Excuse my sending some things on board, captain. I am an invalid," answered Colonel Cheapstow.

"Certainly, sir, you can send whatever you choose; but permit me to say that it is useless your taking the trouble. You will find that we are provided with everything you can possibly want."

Captain Landless took leave, promising to send his carpenter to take Colonel Cheapstow's orders about the fixtures he might want on board.

The colonel inspected the doctor's cabin again, as his was its own counterpart; and when the carpenter came, gave orders to have it covered with Persian carpeting, which he would send from his boat; to have lamps hung, and additional mirrors put up.

Dr. M'Alpin knew his friend's foible, and took no notice of those orders, though the carpenter bluntly observed "that the round-house of the Snowdon was as handsome as ever a ship in the company's service, and that nailed-down carpets would be no great improvement if they should happen to poop a green sea off the cape."

"My hookah, doctor—what am I to do about my hookah?" inquired the colonel. "Do you take yours? You cannot do without, nor can I neither."

"I take it, certainly, because I shall want it at Fernbraes, and Cussim Ali has learned to dress it as well as any hookahbhardar in Hindostan; but I will not use it on board, knowing that to be dangerous and against orders. I will have my callean,* though."

"I shall follow your example, and do the same thing, for I should be miserable without the one or the other."

The morning ran on in these preparations, and at the usual hour the two gentlemen tiffed with Mr. Ouseley; Mr. Curzon did not again make his appearance. When the sun began to decline, Colonel Cheapstow set forth through the Chitpore bazar, with his silver sticks on the back of his carriage as before. His sides brandished their silver-handled chowries,† and screamed to the mob as they passed to clear the way: orders, however, which were much less likely to be attended to in the crowded bazar of Calcutta than in the neighbourhood of the residency, and they were stopped in the quarter of the bazar oc-

* Gulla—throat. Gulla-bands—neckcloths.

† Durwan—porter.

* Callean—a small portable hookah.

† Chowries—white cow-tails to drive away flies.

cupied by the professors of Tubal Cain's craft, amid piles of brazen pots and pans, for full five minutes, a thing which the chaprasseys declared had never happened to their master in the whole course of his life.

They made their way, however, through the silk-dyers, artificial flower-makers, cotton-carders, and manufacturers of Hindostanee sweetmeats, until they reached the Ghaut, where they stopped amid a crowd of the colonel's servants, busily occupied in landing his things. After giving his orders to the head servants of the different departments, he went on board to inform his wife of all he had done in town.

Mrs. Cheapstow was a sensible and excellent woman, though somewhat eccentric, and disposed to speak her mind very freely. She was several years younger than her husband, and, though sincerely attached to him, still liked a little of her own way, and was apt to think that she knew fully as much of the ordinary affairs of life as the colonel. He, amid many good qualities, had two little foibles, which were sometimes teasing, as they were in exact opposition to the feelings of his wife—his high sense of his own dignity, and his love of good eating. Her frank and open nature was above all the little ostentations which long residence at a pompous and luxurious court had in a manner rendered second nature to her husband, and she hated the epicurism to which she traced the severe fits of illness by which he had been lately attacked.

After he had given a full detail of all the particulars, he went on,

"It is an unusual thing, my dear, our going home by the way of China; but the Snowdon is a magnificent ship, and I can never be so well anywhere as under M'Alpin's care. People might think," he continued, with an air of importance, "such a step strange upon my part, unless my reasons were known."

"If it suits us, it is enough," answered his wife; "people will never trouble themselves about it."

"You mistake, Mrs. Cheapstow; the departure of a man of my standing is of some consequence."

"Yes—certainly to those who are to succeed us in the appointment. Do you know, I heard at Berhampore that there are four-and-twenty applications already gone in to his lordship for it."

"I have almost a mind to withdraw my application for leave, and go back to punish such indecorous haste," said the colonel, turning his back, and walking off in a contrary direction.

"We shall be the parties punished, my dear, if Dr. M'Alpin sails before us. If you stay to die here, you will have all these people visiting you in great anxiety to see how you get on, or, rather, when you are likely to go off, that they may come in after you."

"They shall do nothing of the kind," answered the colonel, returning. "But how is it possible that we should have anything in proper condition on board that vessel in such a short time?"

"Oh, we shall just do as others do in that respect."

"It is strange, Mrs. Cheapstow, that you should not consider that more is required for you than for others: my situation entitles you to it."

"Oh, I know that your kindness would do a great deal for me; but if you will not fatigue yourself about those things, and make yourself

ill again, I will get our excellent friend the doctor to settle it all to your satisfaction."

"The captain is a gentlemanly sort of fellow," said the colonel, thoughtfully, "and, they say, knows something of a table; but I should like, before going on board, to know exactly what sort of a cook he has. In matters of importance, a man likes to go on sure ground. I shall ask Captain Landless to let him come up to Curzon's, and show us what he can do. Our bowberjee can give him some instruction in Hindostanee cooking, which will be valuable; and his wines, I should like to know if they are drinkable; but the most certain way will be to send my own; it is impossible that he can have anything like them. It is a serious consideration, my dear, one's comfort at sea for five months, and must be properly attended to."

"You forget, I think, Cheapstow, that you are on a regimen, and that the doctor will be there to see it enforced."

"My first care to-morrow morning shall be to look over the list of our wines," answered the colonel, without attending to an observation which he was willing to think superfluous: "Now let us go."

The colonel talked all the way back to Mr. Curzon's house on the various schemes for the comfort of his voyage. "You see what a fortunate thing it was that I had the set of silver saucepans and spirit of wine lamps made. It would have been impossible to taste coffee or chocolate of their making. What we are to do for butter for breakfast after the first week, is more than I can devise, unless, indeed, I can get the captain to give house-room to one of my cows, and then Mirza can make it every morning in the little glass churn as usual: I shall not lose an hour in putting all this in train."

The carriage stopped, and Mr. Curzon came out to hand his new guest into his house, followed by the doctor, whom Mrs. Cheapstow was delighted to see.

Mr. Curzon continued talking with Mrs. Cheapstow, while her husband went over the whole of his intended arrangements with the doctor. Before he could get half through, he was obliged to go down to dinner, but he had no sooner taken his seat at table than he began again.

"I have just been telling the doctor, Curzon," he said, "that I mean to ask Captain Landless to let his cook come here one of these nights, if you will permit me."

"Mr. Curzon will neither permit or encourage anything of the kind," said Mrs. Cheapstow, answering for their host.

"Nor I neither," joined the doctor, "though I have a high opinion of your bowberjee's talents, colonel. I think, as Mrs. Cheapstow has no objection, we had better leave them behind us at present."

"He knows some things, though," said the colonel, "which are not known to all the world; for instance, Curzon, he would have boiled this capital ham in Champagne, and it would have been delicious," helping himself to a second slice. "Allow me, Mr. Ouseley, to recommend it to you."

"I am so little of a connoisseur in the art, that you must make allowance for whatever you find out of rule here," answered Mr. Curzon.

"It is fortunate for you, Mr. Curzon," said Mrs. Cheapstow, "very fortunate, when men have neither more nor less talents than their situ-

ation requires. Now Cheapstow has talents which can never be called into full exertion. Had he been a cook instead of a colonel, he would have been an extraordinary traiteur instead of an ordinary diplomatist."

"Whatever you may think of it, my dear," answered her husband, whose self-love felt the compliment on a favourite pursuit, and made allowance for his wife's way of expressing it, "there is often more nicety, and precision, and judgment required for the one than the other; to say nothing of exquisite taste, which is a gift from nature. Do not think that I will be laughed out of my opinion. What marks the advancement of civilized life so much as this art? When was it ever found among savages or men, in a barbarous state? It has always flourished in the most refined and enlightened state of human society, and its progress is a just criterion to judge by."

"Of refinement I grant you," replied Mrs. Cheapstow, "if the word mean a perfect knowledge of the art of ministering to corporeal wants, which I fancy is the most generally received sense (though schoolmen may give other definitions), for we are too far advanced to go back to the old stoical or brahminical notion, 'that he is the greatest who has the fewest wants.'"

"An idea fit for a North American Indian," said the colonel; "but utterly discarded by every polished people. Consider the ancient Greeks and Romans in the meridian of their refinement."

"Or we might say their corruption," interrupted the doctor.

The colonel went on: "to what a height they carried the gastronomic art. And our accomplished neighbours, the French—our masters in art and invention—have they not arrived at a very elevated pitch, to which I must confess, for our credit, we are fast hastening?"

"Forbid it," said the doctor, "that we should sink into a nation of cooks: not that I mean to take from the profession in its proper place, but forgive me, colonel, I never wish to see it up stairs."

"We live in a period of discovery and invention," said Mrs. Cheapstow, "and so many conveniences have been sought out—so many delights have been supplied, that any man who would discover means to enable the refined part of the world to consume twice as much of its good things as they possibly can do at present, would be entitled to a statue of gold; a reward greater than the King of Ethiopia offered for a new pleasure."

"Practical philosophy," said the colonel, "is always confined to a certain sphere in life; for when necessity gives the command, it is very well to give philosophy the credit."

"But," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, "the beautiful dreams of speculative philosophy are more attractive and suitable for those who have not to do with life's stern realities."

"I have heard the proposal for increasing the wants of the natives of this country as the most certain means of introducing improvement among them. If, for instance, we could establish a Hindoo gastronomic academy, would not the advance be obvious?" said Mr. Curzon, laughing.

"Yes, certainly, and they had reason on their side who made the proposal," answered the colonel.

"If we could once get the Hindoos above the savage barbarity of resting satisfied with boiled

rice and water, we might hope to see greater exertions made among them to procure the comforts of life."

"The comforts of life, colonel, are, after all, but a vague expression," answered the doctor. "At least, there is no idea that we have of them that could indemnify a native for the interruption of his quiet; we must seek something else for those who think that it is better to sit than to stand—to lie than to sit—to sleep than to wake, and that to die is best of all."

CHAPTER VI.

"Even Nature lives by toil:
Beast, bird, air, fire, the heavens, and rolling worlds,
All live by action. Man is born to care;
Fashion'd, improved by labour. Hence utility
Through all conditions: hence the joys of health;
Hence strength of arm, and clear, judicious thoughts."
DYER.

"I wish, doctor, that you would go out with me this morning, to pay a visit to my old friend, Mrs. Harvey, if you have nothing else to do," said Mrs. Cheapstow to Dr. M'Alpin, as they remained at the breakfast-table after the rest of the party had left it. "You know I cannot very well leave Calcutta without visiting her, since Cheapstow cannot do it for me. I dread to let him run about in the sun more than is indispensable."

"Right," answered the doctor.

"Cheapstow must wait on the 'Lord Sahib,' and I hate going out alone."

"I am at your service. How do you go, and when?"

"The sooner the better; will you order the palanquins directly? Cheapstow takes the carriage for his visit of ceremony, and, though I detest jogging so far in a palanquin, it will be better, if I am admitted, than keeping Curzon's horses in the sun. Tell my ayah that I am going out," she continued, addressing one of the servants in waiting.

"The order is given," answered the man, as he went out with his message.

In a few minutes he returned with a silver tray in his hand, on which was a fan, smelling-bottle, card-case, and pocket-handkerchief, which he carried down stairs before his mistress, and deposited in her chair palanquin.

"And there is another visit, also, we should pay," said Mrs. Cheapstow, before getting in. "A Major Middleton, of the company's service, has married the daughter of a particular friend of mine in England, and brought her out with him. I should like to see her, if I knew where to find her."

"Curzon has a chaprassey who makes a point of knowing where everybody that comes to Calcutta is to be found. He can help us; but I hope it's not the Middleton that I knew at Benares, else, poor girl, she is not to be envied."

When they arrived at Mrs. Harvey's gate in Park-street, Chowringhee, the durwan only opened the wicket to see who came, and, finding visitors, said, "His *beebe sahib* (mistress) was not at home."

"Oh, this is her old way," said Mrs. Cheapstow to the doctor; "a relapse of her valetudinary habits; but, after coming so far, I will not go back without an effort to get in."

"Is your mistress really not at home," de-

manded the doctor, addressing the durwan, "or is she ill, and does not see visitors?"

"The beebee sahib is in the house, sahib, and as well as is her custom, but there are no orders to let any stranger in."

"Send my card up to your mistress," ordered Mrs. Cheapstow. "I know," she said to the doctor, "when she sees it I shall be admitted."

The durwan did as he was bid, and sent up a chaprassey with the card, though he said his mistress never saw a strange face or heard a strange word. Contrary to his prediction, however, the chaprassey returned, begging Mrs. Cheapstow to walk up. The gates opened, and the palanquins entered the spacious compound* of a very handsome house.

The doctor, giving his arm to Mrs. Cheapstow, was in the act of accompanying her up stairs, when another servant begged, in a low voice, that he would remain below, and ushered him into the billiard-room with as little noise as if there had been some one seriously ill in the house.

The doctor looked about for something to occupy the time he was thus forced to spend in waiting, and finding nothing else within his reach, took up a cue, and began to push about the billiard-balls.

"Don't do that, sahib," said a bearer, respectfully, joining his hands as he spoke. "My mistress does not want the least noise, even to hear a crow speak as he flies in the air; we have a watchman, with his bow and arrows, to shoot every one that comes near this house."

"What is the matter?" inquired the doctor.

"What do I know, sahib?" answered the bearer, with a shrug of his shoulders. "It is the beebee sahib's pleasure not to have a sound outside or inside of this house. She turns off every servant who treads heavier than a grasshopper, or speaks louder than a mouse."

In these circumstances the doctor ordered the bearer to bring him a book, with which he would endeavour to pass the time until Mrs. Cheapstow's return, and was very much provoked when the bearer returned with the Civil and Military List, which he considered must, from its frequent requirement, be the most interesting. The "Neel Kittabee," Blue Book, the name they give it, from its being always bound in paper of that colour, is perhaps the only work which every servant in India knows by name.

On following her conductor up stairs, Mrs. Cheapstow found Mrs. Harvey extended upon a couch under the punkah, in the middle of the drawing-room; all the windows shut, and all the doors open to circulate a draught.

"How kind it is of you, my dear Mrs. Cheapstow," she said, half raising herself from her pillows, "to come and see a poor invalid!"

"I am truly sorry to find you in such a sad state," answered Mrs. Cheapstow; and she added, with her customary frankness, "I was in hopes that you were not worse than usual."

"But I am usually so ill—I have such nerves—the least noise or motion distracts me."

"No wonder, if you keep yourself in this kind of dead silence, every noise becomes alarming; but I am happy, notwithstanding, to see you look better than I could have expected: you drive out in the evening, I suppose?"

"Never; it would be utterly impossible for me to sustain all that bustle and fatigue."

* Compound—enclosure within a high wall.

"But you could be carried down stairs, you know."

"I used to be so; but the exertion agitated my poor frame so much, and I was so afraid that the bearers would let me fall (though I had a most commodious chair made for the very purpose, that I was obliged to give it up."

"And do you live, then, without air and exercise? How do you contrive to sleep at night?"

"Oh! I have such horrible nights—if it were not for the little sleep I have here during the day, I do not know how I should get through them, though I have the punkah going in my bedroom the whole night."

"It is not every one of us, certainly," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, "who has the native faculty of sleeping eighteen or nineteen hours out of the four-and-twenty."

"Unfortunately, that is just my case," answered the invalid, who, in her earnestness to prove her unfitness for any exertion, sat upright on her couch, and spoke with great animation; "and my appetite is so miserable, too—if I had not something every three hours, I should die of pure inanition. No one can have the most distant idea of what I suffer; if it were not that this is the coolest room in the house, I would never venture to quit my own apartment"—she looked round on the splendid and silent suite of rooms—"the doctor always says my life is a standing miracle."

"Finding how you do live, Mrs. Harvey, I should quite agree with him."

From the time Mrs. Cheapstow had come into the room, Mrs. Harvey's *day* ayah had sat quietly squatted at the end of her mistress's couch, holding upon her thumb the loop of a silk cord, which extended to the landing-place. This cord was now gently twitched, the ayah got up, and, treading softly, as if she feared to wake the echoes, went out of the room, and after whispering for a moment, returned, followed by a kitmutgar, who, with the same noiseless step, set a tripod near Mrs. Harvey's couch, upon which, having first placed a table napkin, he placed a silver hot-water covered plate, knife, fork, and bread.

"Will you eat a nice, juicy mutton-chop, Mrs. Cheapstow?" inquired the invalid, as the kitmutgar uncovered her own.

"Nothing is so good for those who are not strong; a mutton-chop at this hour, the doctor tells me, is the most nourishing thing in the world—I take soups and jellies in the evening—may I order it?"

"Thank you, it is too soon after breakfast for me; and, in fact, I never touch anything between meals."

"How fortunate you are to be able to do without; I must even have something in the middle of the night."

She held up her finger over her shoulder to the servant, who, with crossed arms, watched behind her couch. He went out on tiptoe, and returned with Madeira, which misted the glass like ice as he poured it out to his mistress.

"When she had finished the whole of her substantial refreshment, the things were removed with as little noise as they had been brought. The ayah again took her loop upon her thumb, and, stationing herself on the floor as before, the same profound tranquillity was restored.

"Do you not pity me," said Mrs. Harvey, laying herself languidly back upon her pillows,

"do you not pity me, Mrs. Cheapstow, being obliged to lead such a life?"

"I never saw any person in my life whom I pity more; and is this your day?"

"Yes! and I may almost say my night also, with the difference of my being in my bedroom; I do not know that there is any other."

"But how do you do with your people? How are they able to stand it?"

"Oh! I have another set for the night; you know that the natives have no feeling to enable them to sit up with a poor invalid like me."

"But you do not mean, Mrs. Harvey, to say that you always lead this life? You do not mean to say that you never go out, and take your meals at table like other people?"

"Yes, indeed I do. Unfortunately, I grow every day worse and worse instead of better."

"And what does Mr. Harvey do? All this is doubtless very distressing to him, and he must feel very lonely if he has not company with him when he dines at home."

"Oh! he is very good; he just dines up here, because I like to see him; he has his dinner in the quiet way you saw me take my morsel just now."

"That is really being good," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, laughing; "and have you got his friends to be as good also?"

"No; but I have got him to give up ever asking any of them here; you are the only stranger who has been within these doors time out of memory."

"I am sorry to hear it; for living in this way alone is at least half the cause of your illness."

"I have not spirits to see any one; talking quite exhausts me; though I confess, my dear Mrs. Cheapstow, that I have been benefited by seeing you this morning."

"Why do you not go home? A cold climate would set all to rights."

"That is what Harvey says; but a ship would make me miserable; I should be without my comforts and without my attendants; the noise would distract me; the trouble would kill me. I am altogether so differently constructed from other people."

Mrs. Cheapstow felt that anything she could say on this subject would be perfectly unavailing, and therefore abstained from pressing it; she saw with pity the effect of climate and indulgence upon a weak mind, and rose to take her leave fully convinced of the hopelessness of the case.

The ayah in turn twitched the cord, and a chaprassey in waiting showed himself at the door to conduct the guest down stairs with the same silence as before. Mrs. Cheapstow remarked that the dumb attendants had looked with wonder at hearing her address their mistress in an ordinary voice, never being accustomed to hear any one, even her husband, speak to her in a tone above a whisper.

Mrs. Cheapstow, on reaching the hall, found her worthy friend the doctor's patience almost expended, as the "Neel Kittabee" did not contain anything very new, and was more interesting to those who were entering than to those who were quitting the service.

"One would think," he said, as he handed Mrs. Cheapstow into her palanquin, "one would think that my excellent friends were in league to reconcile me to my bachelor condition. You have shown me this morning that I might be worse off, and Curzon did the same the other night."

"Yes, yes, doctor; if you begin to grumble on

that score, I shall be tempted to make some more visits for your conviction, though I am so fatigued with this I have made that I shall be glad to get home. I am quite overcome with pity for poor Harvey: think of a man going up and down stairs on tip-toe all his life, and speaking in whispers, and being served by signs, and as effectually cut off from society as if he were on a desert island!"

"Ay," answered the doctor, "he is to be pitied; when the mind is entirely neglected, the body takes up all our attention; that's of all diseases the most incurable; but you forget Mrs. Middleton: if she has married the man I suppose, it will be an act of charity to visit her."

"This visit had almost put everything else out of my head; but can you direct my people?"

The doctor gave the necessary address, and they took their way through the Durumtollah, into the Circular Road, where, after a good deal of searching, they were carried into the compound of a small "lower-roomed" house, daubed on the outside with yellow ochre, standing upon the bank of a little stagnate tank, or, rather, muddy pool, which had been scooped out as the clay was wanted for building the native huts in the neighbourhood; it was covered with decayed vegetation, and overhung by tall, melancholy cocoanuts, which looked more solitary in proportion to the numbers got together; no green thing grows under them, and their tall, branchless trunks give them a funereal appearance.

"This can never be Middleton's place," said the doctor; "it must be some country-born Portuguese writer's."

"What gentleman's house?" demanded Mrs. Cheapstow's chaprassey of a half-naked bearer who was sleeping in the veranda, and who started up, rubbing his eyes, when the chaprassey pulled him by the foot and shook him by the shoulders to obtain an answer.

"Major Middleton Sahib's house."

"Is the 'beebee sahib' at home?"

"Me—what do I know?" said the bearer, still rubbing his eyes, and making a few steps towards the hall, and then returning as if uncertain what was to be done.

The chaprassey, who was accustomed to more alacrity in the service of his mistress, ran forward and announced "Beebee Chiptow and Dr. Al-pin Sahib," at the pitch of his voice, and returned to open the palanquin-door, saying "the lady was at home."

Mrs. Cheapstow got out in a veranda littered with straw, packing-cases, and empty bottles, &c.; the doctor conducted her into the small hall, miserably furnished without mat, the want of that necessary article being supplied by a common settee under the feet of the table in the middle of the floor. The whole house consisted of this hall on the one side, and two small apartments off it at the other.

"A place for a native," muttered the doctor, as he crossed the threshold and entered the little comfortless abode, from which even a breath of air was excluded by the tall trees which run up above the back windows. The mark of green damp on the walls added to the idea which Mrs. Cheapstow conceived at first sight, that it was just a place to catch the fever and ague.

They found Mrs. Middleton seated before the table on which she was writing. She rose timidly, and made several ineffectual efforts to make her solitary attendant understand that she wanted more chairs; Mrs. Cheapstow's chaprassey,

however, alertly saved her any farther trouble on that score by placing those required.

Mrs. Cheapstow, after introducing herself and the doctor, and inquiring for Mrs. Middleton's friends at home, expressed the pleasure she would have had in being introduced to her husband.

"I regret he is absent," answered his wife; "and I am certain he will himself regret missing the pleasure of seeing you, Mrs. Cheapstow, but he is never at home."

"How!" said the doctor; "he does not leave you here all day by yourself?"

"Yes, indeed he does; he has so many friends in Calcutta, and I am a perfect stranger."

"And when he is absent, how do you do with the servants? Ye have not been here long enough to make yourself well understood?" asked the doctor.

"Oh no, only a fortnight, and I cannot call for anything, but must be contented with what they please to give me. Yesterday I had no dinner; there was none brought, and I could not order it."

The doctor looked at Mrs. Cheapstow as if he would say, "That is just the man—selfish and inconsiderate as usual."

"Do you," inquired Mrs. Cheapstow, "not tire, Mrs. Middleton, living here by yourself? You must be very dull."

"Yes; but I hope we shall soon leave the presidency, and then, Major Middleton tells me, it will be more cheerful: he has no conveyance but his palanquin, and cannot take me out."

The doctor was tempted to say, "Then he ought to stay at home himself," but the ungracious observation did not pass his lips.

"You go out," he said, "to drive in the evening, certainly, at least, with some of your friends?"

"No, indeed I do not. I do not know a single creature in the place. Mrs. Cheapstow and yourself are the first who have had the kindness to inquire for me; and I find living in India entirely different to what I expected; every article of food is so bad, and everything so uncomfortable, that I sincerely wish myself back in England."

"You must not be discouraged," said Mrs. Cheapstow, "by the unfavourable specimen you have had. When you know the country, you will find it entirely different."

"Oh, I am certain I shall never be reconciled to it. Last night I was so frightened! an enormous bat flew into the room while I was sitting here in the dark, for they forgot to light the lamps as well as to give me any dinner, and the creature made such a horrid squeaking that I was almost terrified to death."

Mrs. Cheapstow felt sincerely for a poor young creature, left in such a forlorn situation, and denied the common comforts of existence by the selfish carelessness of one who had taken her so far from the bosom of her family. She made Mrs. Middleton promise to spend a day with her at Mr. Curzon's, and offered to send the carriage to convey her. She then took leave, and they had hardly gained the veranda before the doctor began expressing his regret at leaving such a pretty young creature in such miserable circumstances.

"Middleton is just the same man, I find," he said, when they were out of hearing; "he guides this wife just as he did the first. I remember, when she was dying, he dined out every night all over cantonments."

"It is a cruel thing, doctor, to take an amiable girl from her family, where she has been loved and cherished, and bring her out here to die of neglect and unkindness."

"He would have sought long in this country, I promise him, before he would have got such a wife—his character is too well-known; but in England, where nobody knows anything about him, or his behaviour to his poor first wife, he has had better success."

"I am sorry for her, poor thing; hers is a melancholy prospect; she little knows the fatigues and sufferings of following such a man in a country like this. He is not one of the men, doctor, to use an expression of yours, that a woman would go through fire and water for; but, fortunately, it is a case that we do not often meet."

"That's true; prodigality, and not penury, is the habit of the country; and if we do meet with the gripping hands, it must be so much nature with them that it seldom keeps bounds. I have seen in the course of my life one or two rare examples, even here."

"At home, if a woman has the misfortune to marry a negligent, selfish man, as this seems to be, wholly devoted to his own comfort and pleasure, she has, if not the satisfaction of her friend's society, at least the attendance of her own women. The circumstances are so different, that the cases hardly admit of a parallel. Here a woman's life is in the hands of her husband; if he neglects her, every servant in the house does the same."

"Middleton is one of the 'Company's hard bargains;' he would never willingly do anything for them but receive his pay. He turns his duty over to any one that will do it for him, and has always been sick when his corps is to go on service; and never cooks a dinner in his own house when he can get it elsewhere. He likes every part of good eating but its cost; and it is nothing to him that his poor wife is dining upon a starved bazar chicken, dried in the cinders, while he is in the fort, in the 'Buildings,' and the race-stand, and at the town-hall with the 'Lunatic Club.*' He knows that Guntert dresses things more to his taste than he is likely to get them in the miserable hole in which he has stowed his pretty wife, poor thing!"

Mrs. Cheapstow and Dr. M'Alpin reached home in time for tiffin, and found the man, whose house they had just left, talking with Mr. Ousley in the drawing-room.

"We have just come from your house," said the doctor, after having introduced Major Middleton to Mrs. Cheapstow.

"You did not find any one at home?" he said. "How unfortunate I should happen to be out when you did us the honour to call, Mrs. Cheapstow!"

"We were more successful," replied the doctor; "finding that Mrs. Middleton was not from home, we made good our entry, though the only one of your people we saw wished to keep us out."

"I am quite ashamed, Mrs. Cheapstow," said Major Middleton, with an air of embarrassment, "that you should have the trouble of going to such a place, which, in fact, I intend to quit as soon as possible: the truth is, before landing

* Lunatic Club, so called from the meetings being held at the new and full of the moon.

† Guntert, a celebrated traitor.

from the ship, I employed a sircar to take a house for me; and he put us into that miserable, out-of-the-way corner; but I have been out every day since we came to seek for a proper place."

"And not found a house in the fifteen days that your wife tells me you have been here, Middleton?" said the doctor; "I'll engage to provide you with a comfortable abode before sunset this evening. There's no lack of them in Calcutta. Will you, Ouseley, as you pass the Tennis Court, step in and inquire—"

"Not for the world!" interrupted Mr. Middleton, hastily; "I could not think, Mr. Ouseley, of letting you take such trouble—my dear M'Alpin, this is really too kind."

"The kindness is not intended for you, Middleton, so do not distress yourself about it. It is for your wife's sake that I am anxious you should be out of that pestilential neighbourhood. As a medical man, I have a right to direct it, and I tell you that I'll get a good house, in a proper situation, before sunset. It does not do for a young girl just come from Europe to breathe the infectious air of your place."

"You shall not positively take any trouble on the score, M'Alpin. I heard to-day of a house which I think will suit us."

"Get into it, then, my friend, or never let me see your face again. The doctor's advice is not to be slighted with impunity—and get a carriage to give your wife a mouthful of fresh air, too," said the doctor, in a tone between jest and earnest; "I prescribe according to the circumstances of my patients."

"I wish you would prescribe a buggy for me, doctor," said Mr. Ouseley, laughing; "I would get it directly if you would only authorize me to write home to my father and say the doctor ordered it."

"Fair and softly, my friend; content yourself with your horse until you have a wife to drive, or a majority to support it."

"Our friend the doctor, Mrs. Cheapstow," said Major Middleton, with the air of plausibility and easy assurance which often passes current for agreeable manners and knowledge of the world, "our excellent friend, in his old way, avails himself of all his privileges—but here is the consummah: allow me to have the honour of conducting you to table."

"Mrs. Cheapstow will never be answerable for the sin of keeping you from your wife, Middleton."

Major Middleton saw the intention, but was resolved to stand his ground, as was his custom, against all rebuffs. "Mrs. Middleton is one of the most domestic creatures in the world," he said to Mrs. Cheapstow, in going down stairs; "there is no getting her to go out, and I regret exceedingly being obliged to leave her so much alone. You know my duty must be attended to, and I am forced to run from one public office to another, all round Calcutta; I am obliged to go to the adjutant-general's directly after tiffin, and I took the only spare minute I could command, Mrs. Cheapstow, to have the honour of waiting upon you, whom I have often heard Mrs. Middleton's friends at home speak of with the utmost respect and affection."

"Middleton knows to choose the hour well for his spare moments," whispered the doctor to Mr. Ouseley as they followed down stairs; "if he would only put the talents that Nature has bestowed upon him to any creditable purpose, he might make a respectable figure in the world, in-

stead of shaping himself into a poor parasite, whose whole value is in his banker's hands. Was it ever heard of, that a man in his situation in life—in the situation of a gentleman, should tell the lies that he has done within the last half hour? The thought of seeking for a house never entered into his head, any more than going to England in a balloon entered into mine. He will not rest now until he has hooked himself upon Curzon for a visitor after I am out of the way—I know that fellow so well."

Mr. Ouseley laughed immoderately at what he considered the doctor's odd ways, and they just reached the table in time to hear Major Middleton say to Mrs. Cheapstow, "And am I not to have the honour of being introduced to Colonel Cheapstow to-day?"

"He went out early this morning," answered his wife, "and has not yet returned. A thing very unusual with him, I can assure you; but here he comes to speak for himself"—as Colonel Cheapstow's chaprasseys entered, one carrying his hat, and another his sword, while their master followed.

The major was introduced, and Colonel Cheapstow received his compliments with dignified gravity.

Middleton was not so much his equal as to be received upon a perfect footing of equality, and yet too near it to be treated with the unceremonious kindness which Colonel Cheapstow extended to young Ouseley, and all those whose situation made them receive as a favour what they could not claim as a right.

"And what, my dear, has detained you so long?" inquired his wife.

"His lordship was so happy to see me, that I found it impossible to get away; and he insisted upon my going up to visit his lady, who inquired most kindly and particularly after you, my dear," answered the colonel, who seemed highly gratified with the attention he had received.

"His lordship is a man of sound sense, and great penetration and discernment; he is quite pleased with all I have done. I have promised, my dear, that you will dine at government-house to-morrow night."

"It is unfortunate; for Curzon has been kind enough to ask friends here on purpose to meet us."

"The governor-general's invitation is a command," said the doctor, "and all other engagements must give way. Though I have been engaged to a friend for the last week, I must dine there to-night; I wish it had been to-morrow."

"And when his lordship has made the evening for you, my dear," said Colonel Cheapstow to his wife, "it must be taken as a compliment."

"I have understood from one who is much about the house," said Major Middleton, "that his lordship had expressed a great desire to see you, Colonel Cheapstow."

"Do you hear that?" said the doctor, aside, to Ouseley; "if Curzon had been here, his lordship would perhaps have been talking, too, of Persian and Hindostanee works."

Colonel Cheapstow was, however, a perfect stranger to Major Middleton, and received his gratuitous information in quite a different spirit.

"Allow me," he said, "the pleasure to take wine with you, Major Middleton. I thought, my dear," addressing his wife, "that I was received with more than usual satisfaction."

After tiffin, Major Middleton took his depar-

ture, but not before he had declared his intention to Mrs. Cheapstow of returning the first evening he could possibly command, as that was the only time he could hope to find Mr. Curzon in his own house.

CHAPTER VII.

"Their stately ship sail'd gallantly,
Furrowing the dark sea foam,
But many a prow has left the strand
That never reached her home!"

OLD BALLAD.

COLONEL CHEAPSTOW'S numerous purchases were completed, his comforts provided, and his cabins furnished with every convenience that could render a voyage delightful, by the time the Snowdon was in readiness to sail from Sangor Island.

Mr. Curzon, who saw the departure of his highly-valued friend, Dr. M'Alpin, with great regret, as there was no chance of their ever meeting again, resolved to accompany the party going from his own house down to the ship. Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow occupied one Sangor passage-boat, Dr. M'Alpin and Mr. Curzon another.

Mr. Curzon parted from his friends the night they reached the vessel, as she was to sail at daybreak.

"Could I but hope to see you, Curzon," said the doctor, as he wrung the hand of his friend, "could I but hope to see you in my own house!"

"It cannot be, M'Alpin. God bless you, my friend. Farewell!"

The doctor felt, when Mr. Curzon was over the ship's side, as if his last regret at leaving India was passed; his kind heart had suffered by the clamorous leave-taking of his own servants before he came into the ship; some had prostrated themselves on the ground and embraced his feet, while others had lifted up their voices and wept aloud, and he could not see those who had been about him for so many years for the last time with indifference.

Cussim Ali was now all that remained to him of his numerous household, and the poor creature seemed overcome with trouble at parting with his own people and his own land, and finding himself in a situation so new; but, whatever his thoughts might be, he gave them no tongue, having practical philosophy enough to understand that they could be of no interest to any one there except his master, whom he felt to be too much above his sphere to be troubled with "such words."

At daybreak the anchor was up, and the Snowdon stood down the bay; there was only one passenger on board for China besides our friends already mentioned, and a detachment of European troops, with their wives and children, for one of the islands. Before the party assembled at dinner, they had lost sight of the flat shores of Bengal, and a thick fog came on, though the little wind they had continued fair.

The following morning the mist still remained so thick that they could not get an observation; towards evening the wind sunk to a perfect calm, and they felt themselves to be under the influence of the currents, which run with great force in the Bay of Bengal: a situation the more hazardous, as the weather for several days continued equally thick, and they were consequently unable to judge of their course.

On the evening of the third day, when Mr. Clairville, the passenger already mentioned, was walking the deck with Captain Landless, and occasionally leaning over the lee-gangway to observe the fog which was slowly dispersing, he asked the captain, "What can that be which I see white, on our lee bow?"

"White! where? the moonshine on the water, I suppose; pass the word for my night telescope, there," answered the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Down helm, and about ship!" thundered the captain.

"Breakers on our lee bow! Breakers ahead! Breakers astern!" sung out the man on the fore-top.

In an instant all was in motion; the alarming intelligence had brought every one within hearing of it on deck. The ship, under the influence of strong currents, and without wind to fill her backed sails, refused to obey the helm, and in a few minutes, notwithstanding every exertion, struck with a shock which brought the masts over her side. She made a plunge under the falling mass.

"Cut the riggings!" shouted the captain.

The ready carpenters obeyed the prompt order; the severed masts floated under the prow. When the ship struck, a shriek rose from the lower decks, capable of striking terror into any heart less tried in danger than those of the brave-seamen, whose energies seemed roused by such a call. Those who had been in bed came rushing upon deck to ascertain their fate; the women and children, many of whom had been dashed from their cots by the shock, heightened the alarm and confusion by their presence and their screams.

"Peace for an instant, I command you!" said Captain Landless, darting into the midst of the terrified group, and waving his arm with an air of authority. "Peace, on your lives, and hear me. We have struck on a sunken rock, and may yet have time to save ourselves in the boats."

He had no sooner spoken the words than there was a rush towards them.

"Here, boatswain!" he cried, "with the quartermasters, guard the boats, and cut down the first living creature who dares to touch them without orders." The frightened multitude stood still. "Gentlemen, exert the authority which God has given you. Command your families, and all will be well."

The steadiness of one man in authority produced a kind of order out of confusion. The seamen, accustomed to hear and obey his voice in danger, stood ready to do his bidding, and the gentlemen and passengers, aware of the necessity of subordination and co-operation, exerted an effectual authority as soon as their respective children were gathered round their distracted mothers. The captain, seeing in an instant what was to be done for the salvation of those under his care, ordered the boats to be lowered and the lead to be flung, for the purpose of taking soundings.

The fall of the masts was a fortunate circumstance; as soon as they were cut away, the ship was lightened, and perhaps by that means prevented from farther motion, which must have been instantly fatal. She had struck on the sharp point of a rock under water, which, entering through the bottom, held her in equal balance, and prevented her from sinking, though the

water rose in the orlop, and even gun deck, to a level with the sea. The moment of striking was announced by a general and wild shriek of unearthly energy, and followed by the continued gurgling of the water, increasing in loudness as it increased in quantity, and forced its way through all opposition into every crevice and opening of the ship. The women, frantic with terror, rushed about screaming for their children.

"It is all over," said Colonel Cheapstow, who met one of these poor creatures at his cabin-door. "Those who have children are equal with those who have none; but I shall do what I can for you, though it is but for a moment."

As he spoke, a swell, upon which the vessel could not rise, broke over her, and again the same dread shriek sounded, though hoarser and deeper, as if almost suffocated with the weight of the water. The vessel stood firm, and, though many persons were thrown down and severely hurt, none were washed overboard, as, uninjured by the storm, the bulwarks retained their position.

"We may stand until the next tide," said the captain; "therefore, until the boats are in readiness, let the women and children be taken into the cabins that are not under water; it is useless to expose any one here, who is not on duty, to be mutilated by the swells which must break over us."

"Let us take wine in the boat for these poor creatures," said Dr. M'Alpin.

He went into his cabin for the purpose of getting it, and Mrs. Cheapstow also passed out the few bottles which her husband always kept at hand, which were all that could be found, as the rest of the vessel was now under water.

As soon as the longboat was lowered into the sea, Mrs. Cheapstow and the soldiers' wives and children were safely placed in it.

"Dr. M'Alpin will go in that boat, where his assistance may be so much wanted," said Captain Landless.

"Willingly," answered the doctor; "but I must take Cussim Ali with me."

"Impossible!" said the officer in command of the boat; "there is but room for one person."

"And who," demanded the captain, sternly, "is this Cussim Ali?"

"My servant," answered the doctor, "who is under my protection, and who has left kindred and country to follow me, and whom I will never leave in a situation of danger while the breath is in my body."

"Let him go, Manning," said the captain; "his weight cannot much affect you."

The doctor got into the longboat, and received his half-dead domestic from the hands of the stout seamen, who lowered him down, benumbed by cold and wet.

The boat pushed off. "We are too heavy," said the officer, "too deep in the water," as, drawn by the currents, they passed close under the bow of the ship.

A native Portuguese, in an agony of fear, caught a rope, and threw himself with it from the bowsprit in hopes of attaining the boat. The rowers made every effort to shoot ahead, but he swam stoutly, and had just attained his object, and laid his right hand on the side of the boat, which his weight brought to a level with the water.

"We are gone!" shouted the helmsman, with a fearful oath.

The officer in command of the boat snatched

an oar, and with a tremendous blow broke the clinging arms of the swimmer, who fell off with a look on the face of the officer which curdled the blood of those who beheld it. The women covered their eyes, the boat righted, and the sufferer, with one strong, convulsive gasp, sunk like a stone, and was seen no more. For an instant the whirling waters eddied round in the spot where he disappeared, and then a bubble broke, as the breath of life, over which they closed, rose to the surface.

"An unblest deed!" said the doctor. "I would not have the expression of those eyes turned upon me for all the sun looks down upon."

"I have done my duty," said Manning, resting upon the oar he had just used. "The lives of all here were intrusted to my care, and if it had been my own brother I must have done the same; another instant would have sent every soul to the bottom."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the weather-beaten helmsman; "a seaman's duty is sometimes harder than a landsman dreams of."

"As God knows, this night can testify," said the doctor, whose strongly agitated countenance showed the agony which was within.

Mrs. Cheapstow continued to rest her head on her hand, while her fingers covered her eyes. Manning, in the stern, conscious that he had done his duty, attended only to the movements of the boat under his care. A clear morning began to dawn, and he found that, drawn by the currents, they were within a short distance of a little rocky island which seemed to be thickly wooded. They were obliged to coast the whole side of the island nearest to them before they could find a landing-place; at length they fortunately discovered a small sandy bay, on one side of which a flat ledge of rock ran into the sea like a natural pier, and as the water was deep enough to admit the boat's coming quite close, the women and children were landed without difficulty. Manning superintended the whole operation, and gave the most active assistance, though Mrs. Cheapstow almost shrunk from his offered help.

Cussim Ali, who was the last of the passengers to quit the boat, and who had not altogether recovered from his cold and sickness, in endeavouring to reach from the side to the shore, where his master extended a hand to assist him, lost his footing, fell between the boat and the rock, and was out of sight in an instant.

"Let go the cable!" cried Manning to the men who held the vessel in shore by a rope from her bow, while, stripping off his jacket, and throwing it on the beach as he spoke, he jumped into the water.

The boat drifted from the shore, and neither Cussim Ali or Manning were visible to the anxious spectators. In a few seconds, however, the latter rose to the surface with what appeared to be the drowned body of the poor native in his left hand, which he had strongly clinched in the Mussulman's sash. He swam with him towards the boat, which pulled to meet him, and a seaman with powerful arm at once lifted him in. Manning turned and soon reached the shore, where in another instant he was assisting the men to haul in the boat, which was no sooner effected than Cussim Ali was delivered to his master, not drowned, but so near it that it required some exertion of the doctor's art to restore him to life.

When the doctor was quite satisfied of his poor follower's recovery, he remembered his deliverer.

"Sir," he said, going up to Manning, who, as soon as he saw that Cussim was out of danger, only thought of wringing the water from his clothes, "what can I do to show my sense of what you have this day done—you have preserved a life that, though of but little worth to others, is much to me."

"I have done but my duty," answered the officer, with the utmost unconcern. "I would deserve to be blamed if I had done otherwise."

"You risked your life to save that poor creature, who would have been drowned had it not been for you," said the doctor.

"The boat, and every one in it, was put under my care by my captain, and I hope I know my duty as a seaman better than to let life or anything else come between me and its execution."

"Nobly answered!" said the doctor; "and I hope you'll forgive what I said in a moment when I could not so well judge of your sentiments."

"Freely" returned the officer; "I did my duty then, and I did no more now. It cannot be expected that a landsman should enter into a seaman's feelings—though you too, doctor, have perhaps witnessed a regimental flogging, and in the discharge of your duty, let the drummers lay on while the man was able to bear another lash, and you may have used the knife and lopped the limb when it was necessary for the preservation of the body. But the tide is now upon the turn, and we must take advantage of it to get back to the ship."

After Manning had left him, the doctor stood for a few minutes musing upon a leaf in the human heart which had not yet fallen under his observation. "Here is a heart of iron," he said, "in a breast of steel, as his messmates will say; but the more flinty the duties are which strike upon it, the brighter will the sparkles from it be; and I almost believe he has as much satisfaction in the one duty this day performed, as in the other; the single circumstance of its being duty hallows it in his eyes. When I saw a suppliant wretch clinging for life, he only saw an imminent danger to those under his care, and his only thought was to save them; and when it was done, I can never forget the look of those eyes; he neither saw, nor heard, nor thought of anything but the vessel under his command, as she righted, and he thinks as little of having risked his life to save my poor Cussim; but, whatever he may think of it, I'll never forget it, and it will go hard with me but it will meet him yet."

With this resolution the doctor rejoined Mrs. Cheapstow, whom he found with the soldier's wives and children: "Do you see anything of the colonel," she said, "doctor? Surely the second boat, in which he and the men were to come, might be here by this time."

"That's impossible, with such currents, and the tide too against them," answered the doctor; "so we need not expect them yet for an hour or more; and in the mean time, while I go and look for a better place, stay you here in the shelter of the rocks."

"I will go with you, doctor," said Mrs. Cheapstow. "I have no children to detain me, and I will take this mug, which somebody has fortunately brought on shore, and endeavour to find water for the poor infants who are dying with thirst. The little wine which we took with us is all expended, and it seems rather to have increased the evil than done any good."

"Keep your children in the shadow of the rocks," said the doctor to the women, who were

anxiously thronging round to hear what was determined upon. "Try to amuse them, and keep them from crying, which makes them but the more thirsty, and we will return as soon as we have found anything eatable or drinkable."

The doctor had providently brought his gun, and made himself almost certain of meeting with birds of some kind. "I cannot speak to you of what has passed this day," said Mrs. Cheapstow to the doctor, as soon as they were alone. "Let us rather think and speak of what we have to do; I trust the other boats will soon arrive; I am miserable about Cheapstow, who, I know, cannot and will not leave the vessel until the soldiers are out of it."

"If we could but discover fruit or water, we might do until the other boats come, for they will certainly bring us something else; we shall be in a fearful condition with these famishing bairns and their miserable mothers; but let us hope the best, and try what we can do."

Cussim Ali, recovered from the effects of a plunge which had nearly cost him his life, followed his master, and earnestly sought for the two necessities of which they were so much in want. Finding that their little island was altogether flat, he mounted into the top of a tall tree, and from that height perceived a pool of water through a small opening in the wood. Cussim had a considerable portion of the activity and intelligence which is oftener found in Hindostan among old men than young; though he had certainly passed his youth, he had not attained the years which his white beard might seem to indicate. When, from the top of the tree, he had announced his joyful discovery (and the inordinate quantity of salt water he had taken made him doubly rejoice in the sight of fresh), his master and Mrs. Cheapstow went to the spot, and had the satisfaction to find that it was better than could have been expected.

"I have my gun, you see, Mrs. Cheapstow," said the doctor, "so do not be afraid of wild animals; but it is better to try and find whether they haunt here, before we bring these poor creatures and their little ones."

After the narrowest inspection of the pool and its neighbourhood, Cussim Ali gave it as his opinion that there were no beasts of any kind there; and on such a subject his was a high authority, as he had all his life been a kind of sportsman in his leisure hours, and been accustomed to provide something for his own curry, and, to use his own phrase, "knew that work well."

"There are no beasts here, sahib," he said, "not even deer; you see that the moss on the trees is untouched, and even the long, tender shoots from the root, which deer like best; your own eyes see that, sahib; and if there are no deer there can be no tigers: what would they eat in such a place as this?"

Relieved from apprehension on this score, the doctor and Mrs. Cheapstow returned to the spot where they left their fellow-sufferers with the good news of their discovery. On reaching the beach, they had the satisfaction to see another boat from the ship so near that they could distinguish Colonel Cheapstow and Mr. Clairville among the soldiers with whom it was filled.

Mrs. Cheapstow went forward on the rocks to meet her husband, who vainly begged she would not expose herself in the sun, and when the first pleasure of seeing him safely landed had subsided, she perceived that he was followed by his

Portuguese servant Mirza, carrying a well-stuffed bag over his shoulder.

"What have you brought, Cheapstow?" demanded his wife. "Provisions, I trust, for we have not been able to find any eatable thing in this uninhabited place."

"How unfortunate!" said the colonel; "I never, for an instant, doubted of your finding plenty of game, and have even made Mirza bring a lamp and some sauce, that we might do them justice. However, we shall certainly find fish, and the sauce will not be altogether useless."

"But that is not all your bag contains—what else have you?"

"A change of clothes for you, my dear, and your jewel-box, which I saved from the hands of one of the men, who was in the act of breaking up your trunks after the first boat had left the vessel; and I have also taken my own boat-cloak and M'Alpin's, which, by your account of the place, are more likely to be useful than the first-mentioned articles; since there are no lives lost, nor, I hope, likely to be (for I think the captain and the whole of the seamen will be here in a few hours), the worst part of our disaster is, falling on a desert island."

"The longboat, then, which brought us here, had not reached the ship before you left it, Cheapstow?" demanded his wife.

"No, nor was she within hail of us; we saw her at a distance, taking advantage of the currents, which set outward, while we were obliged to do just the contrary. But the captain, when he returns in her, will not omit to bring provisions of all sorts, and shooting and fishing materials. There must be something on the island."

"I fear that, with so many, we shall be dreadfully off," answered Mrs. Cheapstow; "but I am very much obliged to you for thinking of my comfort in such circumstances."

The seamen who had brought this last boat were so much fatigued with the hard labour they had had in pulling against the currents and ebb tide, that they declared themselves utterly unable to go off again until the afternoon. It was in vain that Colonel Cheapstow and Dr. M'Alpin urged them, by every argument they could think of, to make a strenuous exertion where time was so precious; the heat of the sun and intense thirst had quite exhausted them, and they, with the rest, took their way to the water which had just been discovered; there, having satisfied their thirst, they threw themselves to sleep in the shade of the trees. Some of the soldiers had, fortunately, taken a few biscuits in their pockets, which, soaked in the water, served for a time to allay the hunger of the children; others had loaded themselves, as far as they could do it without being perceived, with things of more value and less utility.

"This is dreadful, M'Alpin!" said the colonel. "What can be done for ourselves and these unhappy infants, who must perish if relief is not speedily procured?"

"This island," answered the doctor, "has every appearance of being utterly uninhabited by either man or beast; still, we are not altogether sure; my advice is, that we keep ourselves quiet until the sun is a little lower (for it would be making bad worse to bring illness among us), and then make the circuit of the place."

"I quite agree with you, M'Alpin," answered Colonel Cheapstow; "and then let us divide into separate parties, and coast the island in opposite directions, some within and some without the

rocks, as at low water we may possibly find turtle, or fish of some kind, and we shall at once ascertain whether it contains animals, fowls, fruit, or anything eatable, without wasting our strength in useless anticipations."

The plan of operation once fixed, the parties waited more particularly for the hour when they could put it into execution. Dr. M'Alpin tried to persuade Colonel Cheapstow, whose health was but partially re-established, to leave him, Mr. Clairville, and the men, to undertake this fatiguing research; he, however, in his character as commanding officer, was by no means to be dissuaded from undertaking what he conceived to be a duty upon him, and he set out on the circuit of discovery in one direction, with some of the men, while Dr. M'Alpin and Mr. Clairville took another. Mrs. Cheapstow, with the rest of the party, remained near the landing-place, in case the boat should arrive in their absence.

After a long and fatiguing walk over sharp and slippery coral rocks, Colonel Cheapstow and his friend, Dr. M'Alpin, met on the other side of the island without having discovered anything but a few shellfish left among the rocks by the ebb, and a few sea cocoanuts above the water-mark, which seemed rather to have been thrown on the beach by the tide than to be the produce of the island. Weary and dispirited, they were joined by Mr. Clairville and the others, who had explored the interior with as little success. Some large rats, making their way to the seashore, to feed upon what the ebb might have left them, were the only living creatures they had seen.

"If there were monkeys," said Cussim Ali, "we would have been sure of fruit; and if there were birds, we should find grain; but there is neither the one nor the other: in this bad place there is nothing but water to fill our stomachs."

"It's but too true, Cussim," said his master; "but if there's nothing to benefit us, there's nothing to hurt us; so we must just go back again and wait till the boats come."

CHAPTER VIII.

" 'Tis not for mortals always to be bless'd;
But him the least the dull or painful hours
Of life oppress, whom sober sense conducts,
And virtue through this labyrinth we tread."

ARMSTRONG.

FROM the moment the ship struck, Captain Landless had only thought of saving the lives of those under his command, as it was plain that in such a situation the vessel could not very long hold together. To send off the boats with as many as they could contain was therefore his first object: "If we can land the people," he said to Manning, "we shall be able to get provisions afterward; and if we cannot do both, at all events, let us save the lives first."

Unfortunately, in getting the boats into the water, some neglect occurred in the darkness and confusion, by which two of them were staved against the ship's side, so that two only remained for the present service. The longboat, under Manning's skilful direction, after having landed her passengers, reached the wreck just as the tide began to make, and the swell agitated the ship so much that the captain almost feared that she would have floated from her present position, when she must inevitably go down.

After the two boats containing all the passengers and a few of the ship's company had left him, Captain Landless found that, by the flow of the tide, he and the seamen would be obliged to betake themselves to the maintop, the only part of the rigging which yet remained standing, and which they had reason to be thankful had not been cut away with the rest. The water now rose over the maindeck, and from its weight and pressure on the vessel, widened the opening below, so that she commenced to rock and plunge a little head and stern.

"We shall stand out this tide, I think," said the captain.

"If it does not come on to blow," answered the boatswain; "and for the present it looks well to windward. We shall stand this tide, though our seams begin to open."

"Mr. Manning must soon be here with the longboat," said the captain. "She will be enough for all the hands we have now; and when the jollyboat returns, she will be able, by the ebb, to get some spirits, rice, and hams."

These were the stores most at hand, and least likely to suffer from the water, which had drowned the whole of the livestock in the commencement, and washed them overboard very soon after.

From the maintop Captain Landless watched the return of his boats, and saw, with his telescope, that Mr. Manning had pushed off from the island with the first of the ebb, though the currents ran with such violence that he seemed to make but little progress; and he perceived, with infinite anxiety, that what the boat gained in two hours hard pulling was more than once lost in a fourth of the time, and that, almost within hail of the ship, she was drawn back again by opposing currents. It was evident that the men were almost exhausted from such a continuance of exertion, and when the flood tide began to make against them, though they were then within two miles of the ship, it seemed as if they should be obliged to relinquish the attempt as fruitless.

Confined by a number of small islands, which could be plainly distinguished at no great distance from each other, the tides and currents ran among them with almost resistless force; and the tide, as has been already mentioned, was again on the turn before those on board the boat, though they strained every muscle, could succeed in reaching the Snowdon. When they did come alongside, no time was lost in quitting a vessel which threatened almost every moment to fall asunder. At high water her hull had been completely submerged; the ebb was proportionably rapid; and as it left the vessel, the water poured out from her sides by a thousand chinks and openings, splashing into the sea around her, and covering her from stem to stern with a multitude of little rills, like the commencement of a heavy thaw after frost.

When the ship's company had got into the boat, it was discovered that the purser was not among them. "Where is the purser?" shouted the captain. "Hallo, there! The boat is just going off."

"Looking after his gold, I'll warrant him," answered a gruff voice, "though it will not buy much where we are going."

The captain's calls brought the purser on deck, buttoning up his coat, and holding his hands on his pockets; his foot slid on the slippery boards as he drew near the gangway. He

staggered, and in his endeavour to save himself from falling, removed his hands from his pockets to catch a rope, and by so doing let some of his treasure escape, which rolled towards the scupper at the gangway. He made a hurried effort to overtake the rolling money, lost his balance, and, falling headlong overboard between the boat and the ship's side, went down like a stone.

"Ay, there he and his gold go to the bottom together," said the same voice. The captain looked at Manning, who only answered, "No power on earth can save a man with that weight in his pockets. A sixteen pounder could not do the thing more effectually."

"He is gone, poor fellow!" answered the captain. "We can do nothing for him, and our time is precious. We have so little room for provision in this boat, that it is indispensable that we should get the other before the Snowdon goes to pieces. Push off."

The command was instantly obeyed, and they got clear of the rocks, notwithstanding the dangerous surf which broke upon them. They had not got very far when a human creature seemed to start up from the deep, and, borne by the tide, came floating towards them (the head and shoulders out of water) with a sort of dancing motion, turning first on the one side and then on the other, according to the movement of the waves.

"And who is that?" demanded the captain. "I did not know that we had lost any of our people."

"A native Portuguese, who would have sunk us all this morning, in his endeavours to get into the boat, had I not struck him off," answered Manning.

"You did well and wisely, Manning; the loss of this boat would have been the loss of every soul belonging to the Snowdon."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the helmsman; "without that, we would all have been where our poor purser is now."

Captain Landless gave his officer the praise which he thought due to an act which had not only saved the passengers in the boat, but perhaps the ship's company, though he deeply felt the cruelty of the circumstances which had made such a sacrifice necessary; and as he looked on the unclosed eyes and dangling arms, floated by the undulation of the waves, of the awful spectacle before him, gratitude for the preservation of so many lives could alone reconcile his mind to the price paid. Manning, in the steady consciousness of duty, looked on the fearful object but as the seal of its performance. The seamen, accustomed to the Hoogly, were too much familiarized with scenes of the kind to let this make any impression; some of them even passed coarse jokes on the subject, the colour of the skin causing them to regard the sufferer with as much indifference as if he had been an animal instead of a human creature. Those who were most superstitious regarded his appearance at that moment as an unlucky omen for them, and in a voice not to be heard by their officers, related their own experience upon such subjects.

They reached the island, however, in safety, though not until they had seen their deserted vessel go down at one plunge; the wind had risen, and caused a greater swell over the rocks, which lifted her from her resting-point, and finished the catastrophe. All hope of farther aid was now at an end, and Captain Landless was

doubly provoked with the conduct of the crew of the jollyboat, who had not come to his assistance when they were most wanted.

It was dark long before they had reached their little landing-place, to which they were directed by a fire made of dry brushwood, kindled by those on shore, who had anxiously looked out for their approach.

"Where is the jollyboat and her crew?" demanded the captain, as soon as he came within hail of those on shore.

"Left the island an hour before dark," answered Dr. M'Alpin; "neither bribe nor entreaty of ours could make them go sooner."

"The Snowdon has gone to the bottom, and their departure now can be but of little use; they are more likely to lose the boat and their own lives than be of any service to us," answered Captain Landless.

"That creature did not come out of the water for nothing," whispered one of the sailors to his next neighbour.

"Let the fire be kept up all night," said the captain, "to guide them to the landing-place."

The captain, as soon as he set his foot on shore, ordered a general survey of whatever had been brought from the ship, and saw with vexation and anger the large quantity of useless articles (at least, useless in their present circumstances) which had been taken in place of provisions and fishing-tackle.

In the confusion which had attended their embarkation, many had seized upon articles of their own particular calling; and it was but in the solitary instance of the cook, who had not forgotten his largest kettle, and perhaps the butcher, who had taken his knife and hatchet with him, that such an instinct proved useful. Mrs. Cheapstow's ayah had seized upon her mistress's dressing-glass, which she had brought tied up in her chudder,* and Mirza had got his master's bootjacks stuck into his sash. Cussim Ali's inability to take anything had, perhaps, been the means of preserving unimpaired his claims to superior thought and consideration. The soldiers and their wives had also brought a variety of odd articles little available to their present wants.

"What have we here?" said the captain, examining a heterogeneous mass of things which could scarcely have been expected to be found on a desert island. "Who brought all this trumpery, and occupied space which should have been put to better purpose?"

"The native servants," answered the captain's servant; "when once they got a thing in their grasp, there was no making them quit hold, and I doubt there is plunder from between decks among the soldiers and their wives, which is of as little use. I have brought your boat-cloak, sir, and your gun—your powder and shot, your shark-hooks, and fishing-lines, sir."

"That's a good fellow," answered his master; "these are the things we want. Now, steward, see that our provisions are stowed in one place, and a strict watch kept over them; and, in the mean time, serve out a small proportion for supper for those who have had no other food this day."

Cussim Ali guessed the subject of conversation, and hastened to inform his master, in Hindostanee, that he had observed a large hole in the rocks, quite dry, and above the water-mark, which would serve the captain sahib for a go-

down* to keep the "dinner-things" from rain, if any came.

"A good thought, my black friend," said the captain, when the information was translated to him. "Here, my lads, take torches, examine the cavern, and, if it be what he says, let the provisions be stowed there instantly;" and he added, in a low voice to the doctor, "and it will be easier to keep them there, too, from light fingers."

All hands set to work, the cavern was found as Cussim had described it, and the things were removed; the cook proceeded to prepare supper, which consisted of a large kettle of boiled rice, with a few slices of fat ham cut down into it to give it a relish.

Contrary to his usual habits, Colonel Cheapstow found his supper better than anything he had tasted for a great many months. The provision was served out to every individual in exact measure, allowing half as much for the children as for the grown persons; and afterward a small portion of brandy and water was in like manner distributed.

This sustenance, slender as it was, served to raise the drooping spirits of the poor islanders, and, having lighted several fires, to counteract as much as possible the effects of the night air, they prepared to sleep. Dr. M'Alpin and Colonel Cheapstow had, while daylight lasted, collected a quantity of dry grass, and made a kind of couch for Mrs. Cheapstow, who, overcome with fatigue and the agitation she had suffered, was no longer able to sit up.

Captain Landless, fertile in expedients, ordered the men to bring up the mainsail and oars from the longboat, with which he constructed a sort of tent to shield her from the weather. Mrs. Cheapstow and her ayah occupied one end of the frail dwelling, Colonel Cheapstow and the doctor the other; while Cussim Ali and Mirza, like mice, hid themselves in the folds of the sail which hung on the ground. The colonel and Dr. M'Alpin, as soon as they found that they were to be lodged in the tent, made over their boat-cloaks for the use of the women and children, who had no other canopy than the cope of heaven.

Captain Landless and his officers, accustomed to change of place and climate, took upon themselves the duty of sentries, and stretched themselves down all round the tent.

Nothing occurred to disturb their repose; no noise was heard but the rushing of the waves on the rocky shore; and, though Captain Landless often, in the course of the night, looked out on the moonlit sea, no trace of the missing boat was to be seen. The beacon-fire had been carefully attended to, and kept burning all night; and when morning dawned without any appearance of the boat, Captain Landless gave it as his opinion that she must either have struck upon some sunken rock, and gone to the bottom in the dark, or gained one of the other islands.

As soon as dawn commenced, every one was on foot to endeavour to provide, as much as the nature of their circumstances permitted, for their daily wants.

Captain Landless had determined, from the low state of his provisions, to issue but one spare meal a day, and every one's ingenuity was called into exertion to supply the rest. Some of the men ranged along the shore in quest of what the tide might have thrown up, and were actually so happy as to find a barrel of salt beef floated

* Chudder, drapery for the head.

* Godown—storehouse.

from the wreck. This discovery gave them spirits to go through with the fatigues of their search, though the rocks were so sharp that many had their shoes cut through—a miserable prognostic of what was to come.

Captain Landless had, in the mean time, employed several of the men to fell a tall tree, which they set up on the highest point of the island as a flagstaff, and, tying all their neckcloths and pocket-handkerchiefs together, fastened the flag thus formed to their mast, in hopes of attracting the notice of some vessel at sea.

While this was going forward, and the men occupied in different directions, the Lascars* took the opportunity of jumping into the long-boat when there was none to prevent them, cutting her cable, and pulling out to sea, in hopes of gaining some other land.

Manning was the first, as he returned to the landing-place, to discover the theft; and he snatched the gun out of Dr. M'Alpin's hand, who accompanied him, with the intention of firing on the serang.† The Lascars, aware of their danger, pulled with all their strength, and were out of his reach before he could bring the gun to bear on them.

"The Lascars are of the caste of rogues," said Cussim, who was following his master. "When was it that they ever lost an opportunity to run away and leave their masters in danger?"

"Our rascally Lascars," cried Manning, running with the unwelcome intelligence to Captain Landless, "have made their escape, and carried away our longboat."

"Impossible!" said the captain; "they dare not be guilty of such an action!"

"Look there, then, captain, and satisfy yourself; there they are, pulling with a force that nothing but a knavish action would ever make them exert."

The captain looked through the telescope, which he never quitted, and was satisfied that Manning's information was correct, by perceiving that there was not a European among them.

"We should have known them better, Manning," he said, "than to have put it in their power to serve us a trick of the kind. They have taken from us the only means we had of seeking for an inhabited place, or of procuring fish to eke out our spare provisions. They have not, I trust, got the mainsail."

"No," said Manning; "cowardly knaves! they were afraid to touch that, I suppose, though there were only the women there at the time."

"At all events," said the doctor, who by this time joined them, "let us take the comfort our situation will admit: by their departure we have fewer mouths to feed, and the soldiers have lighted on a prize on the shore—a cask of salt provisions."

"That's lucky," said the captain; "we must keep a good look-out, Manning; perhaps the next flood may bring us something of the same kind."

Towards evening a sail was seen on the horizon; but, notwithstanding the signals from the flagstaff, and all the smoke they could raise, the strange sail stood on without taking any notice of their endeavours.

"At any rate, we are not out of the course of ships," said the doctor. "Let us take comfort

from that, Captain Landless; to-morrow, who knows but what we may be more fortunate?"

In the evening the daily meal was again cooked, and dispositions made for passing the night as before. Cussim Ali fortunately found a small fish in a pool, which he broiled on the coals for himself, being too good a Mussulman to allow hunger even to be the cause of his eating rice that had been polluted by the forbidden ham. Mrs. Cheapstow's ayah was not so scrupulous, though she declared her intention of absolving herself from the crime, and buying back her caste, if ever she lived to return to Bengal.

The next day, and several following, passed in the same manner. Many sails were seen, but one after another passed without taking the slightest notice of their repeated signals, probably thinking that the smoke which they sent up was only made by fishermen cooking on the shore.

Their shoes, in a short time, were cut to pieces by the sharpness of the coral rocks, and their feet so lacerated and swelled, that, dispirited by repeated disappointments, when a ship was seen, very few had spirits to climb the flagstaff to make the requisite signals. Even fishing, more necessary, as it was every day, by the consumption of their provisions, became an insupportable task, and nothing but Captain Landless's threat to cut off the allowance of those who did not make the exertion induced many to bear the torment of the salt water on their excoriated feet.

Their prospects every day became darker and more hopeless, and they began to dread that fear of the currents running among those islands would forever prevent ships from approaching them. Mrs. Cheapstow had, in the commencement, consoled herself by observing that her husband's health was visibly amended, and the hope that their residence on the island would not be of very long continuance. Many were of opinion that the Lascars, who were well acquainted with the bay, would make the mainland, and, by giving information of the wreck of the Snowdon, be the means of sending some vessel to the assistance of her crew; but, as day after day passed, the expectation died away. Each tried to conceal his apprehension from the other, and to talk of hopes which were no longer felt.

Three weeks of torturing suspense had now passed away, and their scanty provisions were almost expended, when one evening, after having made several signals, which they believed to have passed without notice, they were surprised by the welcome appearance of a boat pulling round the wooded corner of their island to their little landing-place.

"Thank God!" said Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow, in a breath.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the doctor.

Every one crowded down to the pier to greet the new arrivals. They found that the boat was commanded by a European lad, and manned by Lascars, and that she belonged to a "country-ship," one of the trading vessels between Ganganam and Acheen. "Captain Hawser," he said, "had seen their flag, and, knowing that the island was uninhabited, had sent him to bring off as many as their boat could contain, and, thinking that they might be in want, he had also sent rice and brandy."

"Let the women and children go first, as before," said Captain Landless, "with Colonel Cheapstow, Dr. M'Alpin and their servants; and I will thank you, young man, to make Cap-

* Lascars—native seamen.

† Serang—chief of the Lascars.

tain Landless's compliments, of the Honourable Company's late ship *Snowdon*, to Captain Hawser, and say how much I am indebted to his humane attention; and I trust he will make our distresses known to the proper authorities in the first port he may reach."

"Depend upon us for that," said Colonel Cheapstow and the doctor, both speaking together; "if money can procure a vessel, she shall be sent without losing an hour."

"We shall do what we can to get the boat sent back for you, sir, when we reach the ship," said the lad.

"Thank you, my good friend," answered Captain Landless; "I shall be glad to send off several of my people who have suffered in their feet, but it will be impossible for me to leave the island while a man remains upon it."

"Farewell, my brave friend," said the doctor, shaking hands with Captain Landless; "I trust we shall yet meet in the land o' cakes. Fare ye well, Manning; and if government has not a ship to send for you, I will hire one and send it myself, I give you my word."

Fellowship in suffering had made Colonel Cheapstow and Dr. M'Alpin personally acquainted with every man on the island, and they both deposited orders on Calcutta to a considerable amount, in the hands of Captain Landless, for the use of his ship's company, who greeted the departure of the boats with loud cheers, waving their hats, and wishing a prosperous voyage to those on board.

When those who were thus unexpectedly released from their almost hopeless captivity had reached the "*Eastern Star*," and that Captain Hawser was made acquainted with the necessities of those on shore, though his small vessel did not admit of his receiving many more passengers, he generously freighted the boat and sent her to the island a second time, with rice, sailcloth, hatchets, saws, hammers, nails, and a part of his own little provisions, that they might be enabled to construct a hut to shelter them from the weather. Fortunately, no rain had fallen during their stay on the island, but such drought could not be expected much longer.

The *Eastern Star* was laid to so near the island that her boat went and returned in a fourth part of the time which had been consumed by those from the unfortunate *Snowdon*; on her second return she brought Mr. Clairville and a few of the men, whose feet were in a deplorable condition. Captain Hawser gave up his own cabin to Mrs. Cheapstow, and did everything which circumstances would permit, during the three days they were in reaching Gangam, for the comfort of his half-famished passengers.

There was no other vessel fit for sea at the time the *Eastern Star* reached the port; but Colonel Cheapstow represented the urgent necessity of those he had left on the island with such force, that she was taken up on account of government for this service, and Captain Hawser employed men to work night and day in unloading her and getting the stores on board requisite for so many Europeans. The good doctor in conformity to his promise, spared neither trouble nor expense in procuring whatever could be useful. Mrs. Cheapstow employed all the durzies at the place in making up as much linen as the time would admit, and every British resident made a contribution from their wardrobes for the use of those who were literally in rags. It was determined that the *Eastern Star* should take the

islanders back to Calcutta, and that, as soon as another vessel could be got ready for their transport, the soldiers' wives and children should be sent there also.

When all these arrangements were effected, Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow and the doctor had leisure to think of themselves and their own wants. They had been, the moment their distressed situation was known, most kindly received into the house of an old resident at Gangam, where they only proposed to remain long enough to recover their fatigues, recruit their wasted strength, and get what was indispensably necessary before they proceeded *dawk** along the coast to Madras, as the season was so far advanced that they preferred sailing from that port to Europe to returning again to Calcutta.

Both the doctor and Colonel Cheapstow left substantial tokens of their gratitude with Captain Hawser at parting. He was the bearer of letters from them to Captain Landless, announcing the arrangements which had been made, and repeating their feelings of gratitude to him, and friendly interest in their fellow-sufferers. Dr. M'Alpin, in writing to Mr. Manning, begged that he would draw whatever money he required while in Calcutta out of the hands of his agent, whose address he enclosed; and at the end of three days from that on which they entered the port, they had the satisfaction to see the *Eastern Star* weigh anchor and depart, better provided with food and wearables, than could possibly have been expected in so short a time.

Having such a long land journey to perform, Dr. M'Alpin judged it prudent for Colonel Cheapstow to keep perfectly quiet; and having taken upon himself to make the requisite preparations, he trusted that his friend would be able to undergo the fatigue without material injury. Several days must elapse before the *dawk* could be laid, and, in the mean time, he resolved to gratify himself by paying a visit to the celebrated temple of Jaghurnaut.

CHAPTER IX.

"The ascending pile
Stood fix'd her stately height; and strait the doors
Opning their brazen folds, discover wide
Within her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
And level pavement: from the arched roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky."

MILTON.

WHEN Dr. M'Alpin arrived at the temple famous over India for its antiquity and unrivalled splendour, he stood dumb with wonder on beholding such an extraordinary structure, and looked from the roof to the base as if he almost doubted that man's labour was capable of accomplishing such a work.

The temple, enclosed by two courts of surprising extent, surrounded by high walls, and pillared verandas round their interior, stands on an immense platform of solid rock: an enormous mass of granite has been, by incredible labour, cut down to an exact level, a few feet above the ground, for the foundation of this gigantic work. The great pyramid, in stupendous altitude, rears itself, gray with the tints of time, in the midst of this enclosure. The centre pyramid over the

* *Dawk*—post.

grand entrance, and the whole face of the temple, is wrought in endless sculpture as far as the eye can reach.

It is impossible by words to give an idea of the imposing magnitude of this mass of building; to show how inadequate description must be, it is sufficient to mention, that at a hundred and fifty feet from the ground, the greatest height to which measurement has yet extended, each single stone used in the building has been found to consist of granite blocks of a thousand square feet. The riches of this temple, which are reputed to be incalculable, have never been exposed to European eyes, since a Frenchman, in the disguise of a native performing penance, contrived to effect an entrance into the temple, and in the night stole a ruby of immense value, one of the eyes of the idol.

Nothing can be more hideous than this frightfully misshapen image of Jaghurnaut, which, from superstitious reasons, was hewn entire out of a log of wood, which the Brahmins reported to have been by miraculous means landed on their coast.

The doctor, in surveying the place, recognised at a little distance a Brahmin whom he had formerly known at Benares. The regular and finely-proportioned features of this man's face had altogether a lofty and contemplative character, which accorded well with the dignified carriage of his body; his age might be about thirty-six. His forehead and nose were marked down the centre with nicely-drawn lines of yellow paint, which denoted the caste to which he belonged; his bosom was marked with the same sign, and round his neck hung his brahmince beads, and a small-linked gold chain. His dress consisted merely of a piece of white cotton with red ends, passed two or three times round his waist, and hanging down to the knee, with a muslin jacket tight to his shape, and a snow-white turban of the same material.

When Dr. M'Alpin approached, he bent his head in two or three respectful salaams. "The sahib is welcome," he said, speaking in Hindostanee. "We are happy to see him in this place."

The doctor raised his hat after the manner of European salutation; a compliment to which natives acquainted with European manners are generally very sensible.

"I am happy to see you in health, Krishen," he said; "and much as I have seen of your building in this country, I never have seen anything like this; the interior must be equal to the exterior of such a place."

"The sahib would think so, if he could see its splendour with his own eyes; the gold, and the silver, and the jewels making the night seem like day; and the golden lamps like the stars in the firmament, and the smoke of incense like the clouds of heaven. But the sahib has come in a good time, for to-morrow is the beginning of our great days; the pilgrims will come in, and Jaghurnaut will ride out in his car."

"If to-morrow is the great procession of the pilgrims, Krishen, you could perhaps contrive to let me see the temple. I know that it is not permitted for any one but a Hindoo, by your laws, to enter there; still, I know that you are above the belief in all the rules which have been made for the vulgar."

"I would do it for the sahib," answered the Hindoo, "knowing that he has the wisdom and learning of a Brahmin, but my brothers would look upon me with evil eyes."

"You do not believe that the log of wood set up by man's hands is God?" said the doctor. "I am well enough acquainted with your Shasters to know that they say 'God has no likeness.'"

"They are the words of truth," answered the Brahmin, "and were written for our caste; but the ignorant, who cannot imagine what their eyes have not seen, must have a form to look upon."

The doctor felt the uselessness of arguing with a Brahmin on such a subject; he knew that the man before him considered his own soul, as well as all those of his privileged caste, so many sparks of the divine essence, to be "reabsorbed into the ocean of eternal rest" when they had merited bliss by their lives, or by many transmutations been cleansed from the sins they had contracted in their mortal pilgrimage.

Dr. M'Alpin could not look upon the surprising effects of man's patient industry now before him without something of the overwhelming impression which overpowers the mind in the contemplation of the grand features of nature. Its magnitude, its elevation, its durability, all joined to heighten the effect, and disposed his mind to consider the might which is in the arm of fallen man, under the direction of his reasoning and inventive faculties, to produce a work so far beyond his apparent strength and duration on earth. A monument reared by the children of a day, which seemed destined to last to the end of time! if his heart for a moment swelled with a proud thought on the power of the spirit of man, it died within him, and his head sunk on his breast, when the object for which such a temple had been reared presented itself to his mind. Can man imagine such lofty devices for such an end? Can he whose thoughts seem ready to aspire to heaven, who works not for an hour or for a day, but who lays a foundation solid as the mountains, broad as their base, and who rears a structure upon it like them, capable of defying all changes of weather, and to stand against time, bow down before an idol of his own formation?

The doctor turned from the temple to consider a pyramid near it, not less impressive, entirely formed of the skulls of pilgrims, who, worn out with fatigue, and reduced to the last degree of misery and poverty, had breathed their last there. This ghastly, weather-bleached heap rose in white contrast to the dark mass by which it was caused. "Would that these dry bones could speak," said the doctor; "would that these tenantless jaws had a tongue to warn the infatuated, benighted multitude from their way!"

"It is a fine sight," said the Brahmin, looking at the bare pyramid of what had once been human heads. "All these children of Adam died here for the honour of Jaghurnaut."

The doctor turned to regard the speaker as if he was looking on him for the first time, surprised that two human creatures could think and feel so differently on the same subject. He eyed him for a moment, as if his glance would say, "Are you not flesh—are you not blood—are

you not sensible of human misery, and degradation, and suffering?" But it was but for the first moment of lacerated feeling that such thoughts occupied his mind. He well knew that the magic wand of the bloody monster, Superstition, had changed the most revolting scenes into offerings of pride and pleasure in the eyes of millions of his race. Beyond the spot where they stood extended a valley, filled with uncollected fragments of what had been lately living, moving, sentient creatures, among which jackals glided even in the light of the sun, and birds of prey fought.

"What is that?" said the doctor, listening to what seemed to him like a faint shriek.

"Nothing," said the Brahmin. "Some bird attacking a man before he is dead."

"God be merciful to us!" exclaimed the doctor, rushing forward, for his perfect acquaintance with native apathy rather heightened than subdued his irritable feelings. At no great distance he discovered a miserable native (lying on the ground, where he had been abandoned to die) making feeble efforts to keep off the vultures who gathered round him, and bleeding from the wound which had caused his shriek. At the appearance of a living man the sullen troop rose, heavily flapping their black wings, and again alighted on a rock at a little distance, where they remained in watchful expectation, stretching their red, bare necks.

Dr. McAlpin, to his great surprise, found that the wretched sufferer was no other than his own mate bearer, from whom he had parted at Sangor; his present extreme weakness he found proceeded more from exhaustion than illness, and he was anxious to make an effort for him, which he hoped might be successful. The doctor knew that it was vain to expect that the bearers who had brought him to Jaghurnaut would lose their caste by rendering assistance to any one in such circumstances. While he was considering, in great anxiety, what it was possible for him to do, some pariahs* arrived, to deposit the body of a man already dead, and money easily engaged them in the service of the living. He made them carry the poor creature into the nearest shady spot, as it was not possible to take him into a house, for no native would pollute his dwelling by suffering such a guest to enter it.

Fortunately, the doctor found Cussim Ali, with his palanquin-bearers, who, knowing his master's ways, was willing enough to assist him in anything that would not endanger his caste, and at his bidding ran to procure food for Manoorut. There were abundance of stalls at no great distance, where provisions might be obtained for those who had money to purchase it; but the owners, hardened to the fearful spectacle of human misery because they were accustomed to it, at the time of pilgrimage would not give to any one, without first receiving its full value, a single grain of rice.

The doctor took the food from the hands of Cussim Ali, and with his own gave it, in the proportion he deemed expedient, to the sufferer, who, considering the place from which he had been taken, and the hands which had carried him there, had no right to reject food even from a European.

Manoorut opened his eyes and seemed to recognise his master as he put a particle into his mouth; but, though unable to speak, he swallowed his food.

A week before, the poor bearer would have died any death that could have been offered to him rather than to have defiled himself by receiving food from a hand of lower caste; though his master was, in all other respects, in his eyes, an object to be honoured and almost worshipped (for he had often called him "his god"), yet in this one particular he considered him as on a level with dogs; and, had his "caste not been gone" by his misfortunes, he would have shut his teeth against the offered sustenance.

The doctor knew the feelings of those who were about him, and told them "that in his profession he had a right to give medicine even with his own hand, and that many men of the first caste might take what he had touched." The Brahmin remained at a distance sufficient to prevent his hearing what was said; he would not even run the risk of respiring the air polluted by a creature in Manoorut's circumstances. Cussim Ali, who hated the whole of his race with genuine Mussulman hatred, did not lose so good an opportunity of declaring his opinion very freely upon the proceedings of the class to which he belonged.

"This is the work of the Brahmins, sahib; this is their good work. I know that, though Manoorut left his money with his family when we came down the river, he had enough to bring him here, if they had not robbed him. Every pilgrim, before he comes into the town of Jaghurnaut, must pay a tax, and another to the Brahmins before they can enter the temple. You know, sahib, if many of the poor Hindoos, who come from the farthest end of India, can bear that, after they have eaten all their money on the road. Nine days after, when this uproar is passed, there will be more dead round this pagoda than if a battle had been fought on the ground."

"I know," answered his master, "that for time immemorial, every pilgrim entering the town of Jaghurnaut paid a tax to the rajah," and, he continued, speaking to himself, as he often did, in English, "which I fear is continued by our government, I have heard people say, for the intention of decreasing the influx of pilgrims. And what better," he said, turning to Cussim Ali, and again speaking in Hindoostanee, "is your great festival in honour of Hassan and Hussein, when you go about beating your breasts for three nights, and scaring sleep from the world? Are you not as glad to draw blood, and to mark your road with dead in honour of them, as the Hindoos can be for Jaghurnaut?"

"Oh, there is a great difference, sahib," said the Mussulman, earnestly, though respectfully: "Hassan and Hussein were the grandsons of our Prophet, and great warriors, and fought many a battle, and it is well that their name should be kept up, and it is honourable that men should die for them; but for that log of wood, Jaghurnaut? the Hindoos are fools, and of the caste of fools, to believe that any man can get good by dying here; but for us, who die fighting with our swords in our hands, Mohammed has said that the gates of Paradise are open."

* Pariahs—outcasts employed in the most menial offices.

Dr. M'Alpin found that his bearer was not at that time likely to increase the number of victims; he had regained so much of the use of speech as to utter a few words of thanks to his master, who bribed people to carry him to the house of an acquaintance, Lieutenant Armstrong, whom he found was in command of the guard sent to preserve order during the time of pilgrimage.

At his house the doctor resolved to pass the night, as he would never again have an opportunity of witnessing the tremendous scene which was next day to be enacted, and in the morning his friend accompanied him upon his elephant, taking care to keep clear of the living stream, which, with almost as much fury as the Ganges when it has burst its banks, poured into the grand portal of the vast enclosure. Many of those whom long travel and famine had exhausted, borne down by the crowd, were crushed **in** atoms under the regardless feet of the thronging multitude, all struggling forward as earnestly as if eternity hung upon a point of time.

From a hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand persons were there, all animated by the same desire, all rushing forward to the same object, many of them having come from distant provinces, having borne hunger and thirst, fatigue and exposure, in their fiercest extremes, and many, too, having added to those natural evils instruments of torture and varieties of penance which only Hindoos could devise.

It was impossible to distinguish particular sounds; but the aggregate mass of sound, if it is allowable to use such an expression, the voice of this mighty congregation swelled like the chafing of ocean, and rose and fell with the undulation of the atmosphere, the tread of their feet forming a deep, low, hollow accompaniment, resembling the long roll of distant thunder. That temple, like the grave to which it conducted so many, swallowed up the living stream. There they were lost to the eye, and there too, like the grave, all were equal; from the moment they had passed under the portal, there was no distinction of caste or of rank; the prince and the beggar, the Brahmin and the pariah, were equal. Let sages say how it is that man, in the lowest depths of his degradation, or in the utmost height of his pride's inflation, still feels that there is a natural equality which circumstances cannot alter, and that, miserable and erroneous as his ideas are, he no sooner realizes to himself a supreme presence, than he falls, even in his own eyes, to the level of his fellows.

"This is no pleasant duty," said Mr. Armstrong, "particularly when the idol commences his procession. It has now been my lot to be here twice, and I hope it may never occur again."

"The scene is horrid, in every sense of the word," replied Dr. M'Alpin; "yet, being on the spot, one feels curious to see even such an enormity."

When the stupendous car on which the idol was placed issued from the massy portal, a shout burst from the eager multitude, loud, deep, and reiterated. Dragged by a thousand ready hands, the ponderous machine slowly moved on, amid the triumphant shouts of frantic worshippers, and the deeper clamour of cymbals, conch-

es, and tom-toms.* The car was constructed upon an enormous framework of strong beams, firmly fastened upon a number of broad, low wheels. On this foundation five stages rose in regular succession; these stages, which were covered with coloured silk, gilding, and foil, were decorated with talc chattas, flags, chouries, and flowers, and appropriated to the musicians and dancers, who, to the number of several hundreds, loaded the car, making the greatest noise which their voices and instruments could possibly effect.

On the pinnacle of the car, or rather pyramid, was placed the hideous, misshapen figure of Jaghurnaut, radiant with jewels, which, under the rays of a bright sun, dazzled the eyes of his fanatic worshippers. The shouting of the multitude and the creaking of the wheels stifled the groans and shrieks, if there were any, uttered by those whom accident, design, or zeal had thrown under the wheels of the weighty machine, and it was not until the procession, and the train which followed it, had rolled on, that it was possible to distinguish that it had left fragments on the red earth which did not belong to it, and which none regarded.

This, then, was idolatry in its visible form, and these were its real fruits, and this the appalling worship upheld by those who desired to give the people something tangible and visible within their grasp, conceiving it impossible for them to comprehend infinity.

It was not until the crowd had in some degree given way that Dr. M'Alpin and his friend could move from the spot where they had first posted themselves to witness this extraordinary scene, which the continued noise in the distance warned them was still going forward in all its vigour. The doctor begged Mr. Armstrong to permit his poor Manoorut to stay with his bearers until he should be sufficiently recovered to return to his own home, and he took care, before quitting Mr. Armstrong's house the next day, to leave money sufficient for that purpose.

When Dr. M'Alpin rejoined Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow at Gangam, he found that the dawk was laid, and everything in readiness for their commencing their journey next evening. Their cavalcade would be large, as they had no other means of conveying Cussim, Ali, Mirza, and the ayah but by dawk also. A few indispensable requisites constituted all their baggage, which also they were obliged to transport by relays of bangy-wallahs.†

CHAPTER X.

"The quality of mercy is not strained:
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."
SHAKESPEARE.

THE bearers had been regularly laid, and our friends arrived at Madras without interruption, though greatly fatigued with so long and rapid a journey. They went straight to the house of Colonel Marsden on Choultry Plain, who, being

* Tom-toms—drums.

† Bangy-wallahs—those who run post with light baggage suspended from their shoulders.

an old friend of Colonel Cheapstow's, upon hearing of his distress, had written to Gangam to say that his house at Madras was very much at Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow's service, though he regretted that duty obliged him to be absent at the time. This Mrs. Cheapstow would have been sorry for in other circumstances; but at present, when she had everything to get for such a voyage, and Colonel Cheapstow was so unequal to any exertion, she felt she would be more at liberty without even the company of their host. He had kindly left his carriage for her use, so that she could commence operations without loss of time.

The doctor's first object was to secure their passage in the Ruthven Castle, a fine new ship then lying in the roads, which his agent had particularly recommended, and he was fortunate enough to procure exactly the same accommodation as they had formerly had in the Snowdon. He doubly rejoiced in this circumstance, as the prospect of being obliged to put up with a secondary cabin, while those of less standing might be in the first, had in the morning harassed Colonel Cheapstow. Now the certainty that he would not only be comfortably accommodated, but according to his rank, the good doctor hoped would produce a very favourable effect, and he hastened back with the satisfactory intelligence.

On the island the colonel had valiantly endured every privation without murmur or complaint, and at Gangam he had shown himself only anxious to promote the comfort of those who had been his brethren in misfortune. Now the case was different: there were no longer urgent claims upon the generosity of his heart; he was going among strangers, and few things could have reconciled him to occupying a secondary place where he felt himself entitled to the first.

Luckily, the vessel was not to sail for ten or fourteen days, so that there would be time to replace some of their losses upon the Andamans; and their wants were no sooner known at Madras than the house was filled with native merchants, bringing bales of goods of every description, even of precious stones, which they spread out on the floor in glittering array, while they squatted themselves in the midst of their treasures, holding them up and chattering like monkeys. Those accustomed to see the natives of Hindostan could not help being struck with the feeble and diminutive appearance of the people of the coast; their heads, the craniologists remark, have a greater resemblance in conformation to that of the monkey than any others of the human race.

"Have you got fine sewing cotton?" demanded Mrs. Cheapstow of a pedler who was eagerly displaying his small wares.

"Fine sewing cotton not got, but best shoe-blackening got," answered the man, at the same time holding up a cake, as if he thought it a perfect substitute for the article required. "Best Europe writing-paper got—carpenters' ruler got—best 'Eau de luce' got—Hervey's sauce got—all gentlemen take for beef-estate—Smyth and Nephew's lavender-water got—best book muslin got. Take, ma'am, take—something take!" he continued, earnestly, stretching out the muslin, and canooing forward on his heels without getting up. "Good muslin, ma'am, fine muslin, ma'am; I cheap price sell—take—"

"And what is the price of this?" said Mrs. Cheapstow, examining the muslin which she held in her hand.

The native, as usual, demanded three times as much as he intended to take; wisely considering that, as Mrs. Cheapstow was in haste, she would not have much time to waste in making a reasonable purchase.

"Ah, you great rogue," said Mrs. Cheapstow, dropping the muslin.

"No, ma'am, I not one great rogue; what ma'am give, that I take," said he, with an expression which would indicate that he thought himself wise in taking advantage of the folly of those with whom he had to deal. "Take muslin, ma'am, take!"

"But it is not worked," said Mrs. Cheapstow.

"Take, ma'am, take—so good muslin—can get work at Lower Orphans' School."

"He is right, my dear," said Colonel Cheapstow. "I have heard that they do that sort of work beautifully; and, since I cannot go with you, I am sure M'Alpin will accompany you this evening. I am afraid of your going by yourself; the Madras horses are not nearly so well broken in as ours in Bengal."

The muslin was purchased, to the great delight of the pedler, who received about twice as much for it as it was worth, and in the evening, after the seabreeze had set in, Dr. M'Alpin accompanied Mrs. Cheapstow to the Lower Orphan School, where she wished to have this muslin worked.

When they arrived at the house, they were shown into a large hall where a number of girls were at work, under the superintendence of the matron, Mrs. Patch. Mrs. Cheapstow stated her wishes, and the mistress called up several of the girls, one after another, to show the works they had in hand. They were all country-born, the children of soldiers and sailors, who, having lost their parents, and being without provision or friends, were maintained in this institution until they could be married or otherwise provided for.

Mrs. Cheapstow spoke to many of the girls, but with few exceptions found them perfectly ignorant, and in many cases hardly able to return an intelligible answer in English. "You have an immense establishment here," she observed, addressing the schoolmistress; "what do you do with all these girls?"

"Oh, madam, we marry them; and sometimes, when European ladies require it, we let them go out as ayahs, though it is not always that that answers well, either for the mistress or the servant."

"But who do you marry them to?" asked Mrs. Cheapstow.

"Sometimes, madam, to soldiers of the European regiments, and sometimes to country-born men in the bazar."

"But how have they an opportunity of becoming acquainted with such people?"

"Oh, madam, much acquaintance is not necessary. When a man has declared his intention to take a wife, the governors permit him to come here and choose, in my presence; and if the girl does not object, which is not very common, they are married directly."

"Eleonora," said Mrs. Patch, calling to a girl who sat with her back to Mrs. Cheapstow,

"bring your work here, and show it to this lady."

The girl rose to do as she was bid, and Mrs. Cheapstow saw with surprise a fair and beautiful European, though extremely pale. She coloured as she drew near, and handed her work for the stranger's inspection.

"How long have you been here?" inquired Mrs. Cheapstow.

"Fourteen years, madam."

"And what is your name?"

"Eleonora, madam."

"Yes, that is your Christian name, but what is your surname? Eleonora what?"

"I do not know," answered the girl, colouring more deeply. "I never had another name."

Mrs. Patch was occupied in giving orders, and despatching messengers to other parts of the house for patterns and work, so that Mrs. Cheapstow continued her questions without interruption.

"That is extraordinary; and you speak English so well."

"I think, madam, I spoke English when I came here, and I have always liked to learn it."

"But do you then know anything of your parents? Do you know why you came here?"

"I have been told, madam, that I was brought here from the barrack-room of a European soldier who died in the fort."

"Was he your father?"

"I do not know, madam, but I think not."

"What reason have you to think so? Do not be afraid—tell me all you know," said Mrs. Cheapstow, kindly. "Perhaps I can serve you."

The girl looked round as if to ascertain that there was no one belonging to the house within hearing, and then said, "I think, madam, I recollect a gentleman whom I used to call papa, and a lady who was my mamma, and I think the lady died. I have some recollection of seeing her lie quite still, and that I cried very bitterly, and some one took me away, but I do not know how; and there was some one, too, whom I used to call Joe, but I do not know anything more. Mrs. Patch used to be angry when I said anything about it, and so now I have given up speaking, though I cannot help thinking; and she calls me proud, and all the girls call me proud, and they used to say that Joe was my father's name, but I do not think so."

"And are you happy here?" asked Mrs. Cheapstow, who felt herself deeply interested in so singular a situation.

"Oh no, madam, I am very miserable."

"How! What makes you so? You have always been brought up here ever since you can recollect, and you have all you can want. What makes you unhappy?"

"I dare not tell you, madam," said Eleonora, glancing timidly towards Dr. M'Alpin, who had listened attentively to all she had been saying.

"I like your work very much," said Mrs. Cheapstow; "stay with it here, while I speak to your mistress."

Mrs. Cheapstow, before proceeding farther, was resolved to have a little conversation with Mrs. Patch, and she left Eleonora with the doctor, who continued to talk with her, and who was greatly pleased with the good sense of her answers and the simplicity of her manners.

"That is a European girl," said Mrs. Cheapstow to the schoolmistress.

"Yes, poor thing," was the answer.

"She seems a sensible, good, well-behaved young creature."

"Yes, poor thing," was again the answer.

"That being the case, why do you speak of her with pity?"

"Because, madam, her lot in life has not been the most fortunate, and is not likely to be so."

"Not by any fault of hers?" said Mrs. Cheapstow.

"No, certainly, poor thing, far from it; unless, indeed, pride in her situation is a fault, and I do all I can to cure her of it, though I am free to confess that it is only in one way that it has ever been troublesome to me."

"I am interested about the girl, and I shall be obliged to you, Mrs. Patch, if you will tell me frankly all you know relative to her."

"It's soon done, madam, for I know but little, though I was in the house when she came into it, and from that day to this no one has ever asked about her, except in the way of curiosity, as you are doing now, madam."

"How strange that such a child should have been so abandoned! But how did she come here?"

"Fourteen years ago the child was brought to this house out of the barrack-room of a European soldier who died in Fort St. George, and nobody could tell anything about him, for the king's regiment to which the man belonged had sailed out of Madras roads for Europe the very day before this happened. It was conjectured that he brought on the illness which caused his death by hard travelling from some other place, to join the regiment for which he was one day too late. He was found dead in the barracks, and this poor thing sound asleep on a little mat by him. She was sent here as a soldier's orphan, and a pretty, sweet little creature she was then, as she is now. She was, I fancy, between two and three years old, and could not speak plain. I asked her what was her name, and she told me 'Good little Eleonora.' I tried to find out if she knew what was her father's name; but, though she spoke of her 'papa,' she did not seem to know any other name. From the child's ways, I do not think the soldier was her father. She had a habit of calling for 'Joe,' as if she was calling a servant; but I kept all that to myself, for the governors said that she was certainly the man's child; though, as she was very pretty, she had been, perhaps, much noticed and indulged in the regiment; and though her clothes were fine, they were certainly torn and soiled, and they said they might have been given to her—and at any rate, you know, madam, that the soldiers' wives in this country generally dress their children much beyond their station. But let that be as it will, she has always had manners different from the other girls, and lately I came to the truth of the matter."

"A European tailor, who came here for work, saw her, and wanted to marry her; the man never spoke to her, but he told me, and it would have been a good marriage for any girl in this house; but when I proposed it to her, she was ready to go distracted; and I found then that she thinks, and has all along thought, that she is a gentleman's daughter. I tried to put the no-

tion out of her head; for, as I have already told you, madam, nobody has ever inquired after her; and, at all events, if she is a gentleman's child, her father is dead, or does not want to claim her, and then it is just the same to her as if she was not; and I have tried much lately to put notions out of her head which can do no good, but only hinder her establishment in life. Whenever there is any chance of any one coming here, she pretends to be sick, and tries to keep her bed, that she may not be seen; but we have found out the trick now, and it will not do any longer. I should be sorry to see her unsuitably matched, but to refuse respectable Europeans is nonsense, in her situation. She is a good, handy girl, and will be a loss to me, for she has learned to write for me all the letters that I must write to the governors, and to keep my accounts about the work; but it is thought that I do not do my duty when I do not provide for the young people as they grow up, but keep them to be burdensome on the establishment."

"Her situation is much to be pitied," said Mrs. Cheapstow. "I feel greatly interested for her, and I should like to take her with me to Europe. I know that European ladies can take girls into their service from this school, giving proper certificates for the purpose. Will you let her go with me this evening, and I will take care that she comes back to you at ten o'clock? I should like to see something more of her before I come to a final resolution."

Mrs. Patch, on this assurance, agreed to the proposal, and also engaged to have the work Mrs. Cheapstow required finished for her without loss of time.

Mrs. Cheapstow made a sign to the doctor, to whom she communicated her intentions regarding Eleonora, and, having done so, left him to hear the history at his leisure from Mrs. Patch, while she called Eleonora, who had again taken up her work, and asked her if she would like to go to Europe.

"I should like it better than anything upon earth, madam."

"Then you shall go with me, Eleonora, and I am sure I shall have no reason to repent the step I am taking."

Eleonora stood looking at Mrs. Cheapstow while she was speaking as if unable to credit what she heard. Expressions of kindness or interest were new to her; many ladies who had come to see the work, had noticed her European complexion among so many others of a different hue; but, "Poor creature, what will become of her!" "I should not like to be troubled with such an attendant, who would require all sorts of European accommodation." "I prefer an ayah who wants nothing of the kind." "Poor creature, what is she to do!" were the remarks which she was on such occasions accustomed to hear.

Mrs. Cheapstow enjoyed her unaffected surprise merely because it was natural. "Eleonora," she said, with a smile, "what are you thinking of? Tell me."

"You are not jesting with me, madam! you are not laughing at me!" said Eleonora, bursting into tears.

"No, my poor child, no, certainly," said Mrs. Cheapstow, kindly taking her hand. "I mean exactly what I say."

Eleonora kissed the hand which she held without speaking, and her benefactress, that she might have time to recover the agitation of her spirits, turned to speak with the doctor, who told her that he was more interested in that poor young creature's forlorn situation than ever he had been in his life. "As to her birth," he said, "there is no doubt of it: she carries the stamp of it in her face and in her sentiments; and, with your leave, I would like to make a provision for her, that I do not doubt but she is entitled to."

"My worthy friend," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, "we will talk of all that afterward; in the mean time, I am happy that your sentiments coincide with mine, because I know they will have great weight with Cheapstow. I was in duty bound, you know, to ask his opinion before I took this step, but we have so little time that I must even run the risk."

Mrs. Cheapstow then said aloud to Mrs. Patch, who came forward with many courtesies to make her parting compliments, "I shall let Eleonora come back to you, as I have promised, at night, and stay until we have settled everything for her remaining with me altogether. Now will you have the goodness to call her!"

Eleonora made her appearance at that moment, and Dr. M'Alpin handed Mrs. Cheapstow into the carriage, and the delighted girl after her, and then seated himself opposite to them with great satisfaction, revolving in his own mind what he would do for a creature who seemed cast upon the protection of strangers. Her presence prevented him from speaking more with Mrs. Cheapstow on this subject, but the more he saw and heard her, the more anxious he felt for her future welfare.

Mrs. Cheapstow, who often acted more from the feelings of her heart than the dictates of her head, was happy to find, from the little conversation she had with Eleonora, that there was every probability that what she had determined upon so hastily might turn out to her wishes. She thought she discovered a remarkable degree of truth and simplicity in the answers Eleonora made to all her questions, and was glad to find, because the character accorded with her own, that her disposition seemed candid and confiding. "Since I have never had a child of my own," thought Mrs. Cheapstow, "I shall have pleasure in improving a creature like this; she seems to possess a degree of right feeling which will be sure to repay the labour."

When they arrived at Colonel Marsden's house on Choultry Plain, their present home, the first thing Mrs. Cheapstow did was to go in quest of her husband, and tell him what she had done. She recounted all she had seen, and all Mrs. Patch had told her, and ended by saying, "I took such an unaccountable fancy to the girl from the moment I saw her, and felt such pity for her situation when I heard from the mistress of the house how she was circumstanced, that, to save her all future trouble and vexation, I fixed the matter at once, and determined to take her to England with us."

"As your attendant you mean, no doubt?"

"I did at first, when the thought came into my head, mean that; but, after hearing all that I have just told you, and talking a little with herself, I changed my mind, and thought, as we

have no children of our own, Cheapstow, we might as well adopt this girl, who is one of the sweetest creatures I ever saw."

"A soldier's daughter, Mrs. Cheapstow! a common soldier's daughter! Do you propose that I should adopt a private soldier's child as mine, or suffer you to put her on an equality with yourself? What would the world think, Mrs. Cheapstow?"

"That you are as liberal and beneficent as you have always been."

"Be as beneficent and liberal-minded as you please," answered her husband, hastily interrupting her, "but do not propose to bring the child of such a person into our society and to our table."

"But you are going upon the supposition that this girl is a soldier's child—I am confident that she is not; when you have seen her, I am certain that you will be of my opinion. You know you have always said that you could distinguish birth and blood in whatever disguise you met them."

"So I have," answered the colonel, "and I was never yet deceived, though it is not every pretty face which bears that stamp."

"I know your tact that way," answered his wife, "and am willing to stand by it."

Thus challenged, Colonel Cheapstow, who prided himself upon his knowledge in what constituted gentility, independently of fashion or external decoration, gave his arm to his wife, and conducted her into the hall where Eleonora was sitting alone. Her dress was plain white cotton, without any ornament whatsoever; her bright golden hair, parted in the centre, was braided over her finely-formed forehead, and fastened behind in a plait. She rose as Mrs. Cheapstow entered, and, courtesying modestly, but without embarrassment, remained standing.

"This is Colonel Cheapstow, Eleonora," said his wife.

Eleonora made a lower courtesy with the same simplicity as before, and still continued standing. There was in her whole figure and manner an air of resignation, which, to those who knew her story, had the appearance of dignified submission, particularly as the extreme paleness of her remarkably clear complexion heightened the general impression of melancholy which the action of her body and the sound of her voice were calculated to convey.

Colonel Cheapstow desired her to be seated in the tone of courteous civility natural to him at all times when he did not feel his own dignity encroached upon, and his wife clearly perceived that, before he had spoken a quarter of an hour with her new favourite, all his scruples had vanished. She sent Eleonora to her own apartment on pretence of looking for something she wanted, and, when she had left the room, asked her husband "what he thought now."

"That she is a gentleman's child, certainly; there cannot be a doubt of it. There is a carriage of the body and an expression of countenance which never sprung from low birth. You observe that this girl has been out of the way of learning any of those things which she possesses in such a conspicuous degree, therefore they must be inherent; her manners have the unpretending simplicity of childhood, and, though

full of diffidence and respect, there is an innate propriety which flows from birth."

"Now, Cheapstow, you go beyond me; the moment I cast my eyes upon her, I saw that she was superior and ladylike, and so did M^r Alpin; still I could not be quite certain; I might have been deceived."

"You might have been deceived in beauty, and you might have been deceived in shining pretensions or in great natural endowments of any kind; but with her, in the midst of very engaging humility, there is a feeling of self-respect, which comes from an internal conviction, though subdued by circumstances. I think, as you say, my dear, as we have no children of our own, it will be as well to restore an officer's child to her own situation in society."

"Then it is a thing settled," said Mrs. Cheapstow, "to your satisfaction, to mine, to the poor girl's, and to our excellent friend the doctor's. Did I tell you that he is as much interested about Eleonora as either of us, and wished to make her independent by settling a sum for her use."

"That is quite unnecessary, my dear; this young person is under our protection now, and you can do what you choose for her, though it was certainly very kind of M^r Alpin."

"Yes, and it was done when she was without friends. I have not spoken to him about taking her into our own family; I wished to have your opinion first."

"I shall write to the governors of the orphan school, and signify my wishes to them on this subject; in the mean time, you can make what arrangements you please, as there is no doubt of their granting a ready assent."

Mrs. Cheapstow was as active in carrying her wishes into execution as she had been prompt in forming them, and spent the rest of the day with Eleonora, in getting what was requisite for her proper appearance in her new situation put into train; but, with the assistance of a dozen additional druzees, she hoped to be able to accomplish it all before the Ruthven Castle was ready for sea.

CHAPTER XI.

"Eventful day! how hast thou changed my state;
Once on the cold and wintry-shaded side
Of a bleak hill mischance had rooted me,
Never to thrive, child of another soil.
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May my fortune flowers."

HOMER.

Mrs. CHEAPSTOW saw with pleasure that, though her new protégée had received but little education, she had the capacity and disposition which made that little much to her. Eleonora's acquirements were confined to reading and writing, and a knowledge of arithmetic, which enabled her to keep the schoolmistress's accounts of work done in the house. In common with the other girls, she was perfect mistress of all the mysteries of embroidering, which was a considerable source of emolument to the school. Her sedate and contemplative turn of mind found pleasure in reading, and, though she had but few books within her reach, she had bestowed more attention upon them than perhaps might

have been done by many who enjoy a wider range and greater advantages.

The feeling that she was born in a different sphere influenced her mind from a very early period, and at an age when other girls are only occupied about the passing hour, she endeavoured to fit herself for the society she thought she had a right to, and which the sanguine spirit of youthful hope promised she should one day enjoy. Her hours of labour had been more, and of recreation fewer than those of any one within its walls. From the time she could read without spelling, an acquirement very rarely made by any of the other girls, Mrs. Patch employed her in teaching the younger children—in reading aloud upon Sundays, as they had no chaplain, and were too far from church to walk there in the sun; in writing her letters, and in keeping her accounts; and, slender as such means of improvement were, Eleonora had profited by them, and, early taught by hard necessity, acquired more practical knowledge of self-government than she might have done in a seemingly more favourable soil.

The little knowledge with which every school-girl is acquainted had been entirely out of her reach; she had lived as much secluded as if she had been in a convent; of the usages of society and the habits of the world she was utterly ignorant, but her sweetness of temper and benevolence of mind produced in her untaught manners the reality of politeness, and her native dignity of feeling and rectitude of intention supplied, in material circumstances, the deficiency of experience, at least in the opinion of those who could feel propriety as well as understand it. The head, or, where no head is, acquaintance with established rules, will prescribe what is fit to be done on ordinary occasions, but the heart only can dictate what is "virtuousest, discreetest, best;" and Eleonora had, by her undisguised manners and singleness of heart, before the day was done, convinced Mrs. Cheapstow that her efforts for the improvement of her protégée would at least be met half way by the grateful endeavours of an affectionate heart.

The dread of being compelled to some marriage, which she could not think of without terror, had lately preyed upon Eleonora's spirits, assisted by climate, which lends a tooth to every suffering, and given her mind a tone of melancholy which it would require time to shake off. "Sorrow is wisdom," or often the shortest road, if not the only one, to its attainment; and the humiliating proposal of the tailor, which had been made some time ago, had first opened Eleonora's eyes to what she could not help considering as the degradation of her situation, though she tried sometimes to recollect that she should be grateful for the protection afforded her, when she remembered the circumstances in which she had been brought to the asylum; but her religious instruction was not sufficient to make such truths clear to her mind, and mere human reason, even in the most enlightened minds, is more disposed to feel gratitude to the instruments by which God dispenses his gifts than to the Almighty Giver.

On the day of Eleonora's being brought to the Orphan's Asylum, Mrs. Patch had questioned the child in hopes of being able to discover something of her parentage, but from that time

she had been treated upon an exact footing with the other girls, and no more notice taken of her until her little acquirements began to make her useful to her mistress. Then she got more work to do, and had more intercourse with her, without, however, any increase of kindness on the part of Mrs. Patch, or, consequently, of affection on that of Eleonora.

Mrs. Patch was an ordinary person in every sense of the word, and did her ordinary duties in the most ordinary way; she did not wish to take more trouble than she could help, and therefore turned over as much of it as she could to those about her, always endeavouring, at the same time, to convince them that she meant them a favour by accepting their services. When Eleonora returned to her at night, she easily drew from the happy girl an account of all that had passed, and the things which Mrs. Cheapstow had ordered for her. She had knowledge enough of the world to be certain, as soon as she heard Eleonora's description of what her dresses were to be, that Mrs. Cheapstow intended to introduce her into society.

"You are a lucky girl," she said, "to meet with such friends, and to have such fine things, as a body may say, thrown at you. I have wrought here, and toiled late and early for these five-and-twenty years, and brought up one race of children after another, and seen them go out of this house, and nobody ever so much as thought of giving a new gown to me for all my care and all my attention."

"Yes," said Eleonora, untying a parcel which she had in her hand, "one person did think of it, and here it is, and I hope you will like it, Mrs. Patch."

"Who would not like such a beautiful Europe silk!" said the gratified mistress, holding it up in a full light. "But where did you get it, Eleonora, my dear!"

"A man from the bazar came with a great many things to Mrs. Cheapstow, and this among them; and I happened, without thinking, to say how much you would like this silk; and Dr. M'Alpin—you remember the gentleman who was here this morning with Mrs. Cheapstow—said it was a good thought, and desired the man to lay this piece aside, and told me that I might take it you at night; and I was so much obliged to him!"

"It was really very handsome of him," said Mrs. Patch, still examining her present, "and very like a gentleman; and I am sure I am most excessively obliged to him, and I'll tell him so the first time I see him—and to you too, Eleonora; for perhaps, if you had not mentioned me just then, he might not have thought of it: I always told you it was well to be thoughtful and attentive, and you see what comes of it," she said, folding up her silk; "and your new friends, too, will think the more of you for not forgetting the old. I dare say such a genteel, gentlemanly man as the doctor thought a great deal more of you when he heard you speak of me, who have always been so kind to you."

Eleonora went to bed to think over all the last day had produced for her; and, when she found herself alone, surrounded by the objects she had known from infancy, could hardly persuade herself that it was not all a dream; and many times during the night she awoke with

a start, and asked herself if it were indeed true that she was to leave India, and actually embark upon the blue sea she had so earnestly desired to cross, when she had heard Europeans talk of England, and call it "Home." She felt proud that she too was entitled to call it by that name: it was the land which had given birth to her parents, and she taxed her memory to recall all she had ever read or heard of a country which, in her mind, was the soil of everything great or good.

The morning brought with it a thousand new and anxious wishes: expectations had never before disturbed the monotonous round of her life; now her first hope was to see or hear from Mrs. Cheapstow, but the day passed without either message or visit, and another, and another after it. No time in her whole life had ever appeared of such an insupportable length. She thought, when the sun rose, that he was to remain forever above the horizon, and when he set, that he would never return again. The novelty of her hopes made their disappointment more bitter, particularly as Mrs. Patch had in a manner released her from her usual occupations, and left her at liberty to watch every hour on the clock, and to listen to every carriage which passed the road.

At length the almost despaired-of message did arrive, in the form of a note to Mrs. Patch, telling her that Colonel Cheapstow had settled everything with the directors, of which she should have official intimation, and that Mrs. Cheapstow would come at sunset to take her young charge away. There was also a note enclosed for Eleonora, and a change of clothes was sent, which Mrs. Cheapstow desired she would put on, and distribute whatever she possessed among her companions.

Eleonora's slender possessions were soon disposed of: there was nothing she wished to retain but the little frock in which she was brought to school, and which, when she put on the dress of the house, Mrs. Patch had laid aside, in hopes that, if any inquiry was ever made after her, it might be of service. She also wished to keep a few of her best patterns for embroidery, as she told Mrs. Patch now she would have nothing else to do but to work for Mrs. Cheapstow all day long. She took a kind farewell of those with whom she had so long eaten of the same bread and drank of the same cup, promising to write from England, and to send remembrances to every one of them. She dressed herself in the apparel which had been sent, and then sat down at the window which commanded the best view of the public road to watch for Mrs. Cheapstow's arrival; but she was so much before the time, that, after listening and waiting for a whole hour, she mounted to the top of the house, whence she actually discovered a carriage, which she easily recognised to be the one for which she was so anxiously looking.

Mrs. Cheapstow had brought with her a quantity of toys and little trinkets, which she gave to Eleonora to bestow among her young companions, who were perfectly transported with such marks of notice as no one had ever bestowed upon them before; while she settled all with Mrs. Patch, and paid for the work done, at the same time making a present to her on Eleonora's account, which disposed the schoolmistress very

much to rejoice in the good fortune of one whom she said she always thought would come to something.

Human happiness, even when it has attained its utmost terrestrial perfection, is more like sorrow than joy:

"In both we lose the balmy bliss of sleep,
In both we fever, and in both we weep:
In this alone the likeness disappears—
That joy's for moments, and that grief's for years."

And poor Eleonora's, as was natural, was a mingled feeling, and her tears fell fast at the final adieu, as she felt that she was leaving the only abode she had ever known; but such is the inconsistency of even allowable human feelings, that they would have fallen still faster had she been told to remain.

When they were seated in the carriage, Mrs. Cheapstow questioned Eleonora as to what she had been doing during the last three days.

She blushed deeply, and answered "Nothing; for indeed I was afraid, madam, that you had forgotten me, or repented of what you had done, and I never was so miserable in my whole life."

"No? not when they were going to make you marry the tailor?"

"No, I think not; for then I had no hopes to be disappointed, and I resolved, if they should kill me, not to comply."

"I did not know that you could make such strong resolutions."

"Nor did I, until that time," answered she, with the utmost simplicity.

"Well, then, we shall let the subject rest; and, since it is so disagreeable to you, let it never be mentioned again. But, while I recollect it, there is another thing I have to say to you: it is the custom in Europe for every one to have a surname, and I intend to call you Eleonora Cheapstow; and strangers, in place of calling you Eleonora, will call you Miss Cheapstow."

"I shall like that very much, madam. I know, at least I have heard, that everybody in England has two names, but a great many of the girls in our house have only one."

Mrs. Cheapstow was delighted to observe, the first time that she produced her *protégée* among strangers, that she acquitted herself with great propriety. Eleonora had been accustomed to retirement, but not to solitude; therefore felt no sort of awkwardness in being among those with whom she was unacquainted, particularly as she was without a tincture of the vanity which could make her suppose for a moment that she was an object of attention to them. She answered the questions which were addressed to her with the open simplicity of childhood.

"The creature is so guileless," thought Mrs. Cheapstow, as she watched her words and actions, "that it will be easy to make her everything that others would wish to appear."

Dr. M'Alpin had, as he declared, liked her bonny face and sweet manners from the first moment he set eyes upon her; and every day, as he had an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with her, but increased the predilection.

Colonel Cheapstow's health was often so uncertain as to keep him for days together almost entirely on his couch; and when he was not too ill to be incapable of any alleviation, he usually occupied a sofa in the room where Mrs. Cheap-

stow and Eleonora superintended the durzees, whose utmost diligence was hardly sufficient to get all the additional work that was required of them ready before the sailing of the ships.

Eleonora read to him when he could bear it, or did anything she could think of to amuse him, and while away the hours of pain and suffering, as it was impossible for his wife, who had so many things indispensable for his comfort to procure, to be as much with him as she could have wished, and would have been in other circumstances.

Eleonora had, almost from the hour she came into his family, attached herself to his service with the attention of a dutiful child; conduct which, as it proceeded from the feelings of the heart, greatly endeared her to the friends by whom it was witnessed.

Before leaving Madras, both the doctor and Colonel Cheapstow had the satisfaction to receive letters from Captain Landless and Lieutenant Manning, from Calcutta, where Captain Landless informed them they had safely arrived, after a tedious passage against the monsoon, having only lost five men from sickness, a thing, he said, unheard of after such sufferings; and they were now on the point of embarkation in the first ships for Europe. He concluded by hoping to have the pleasure of meeting them all in London at no very distant date.

Manning wrote to thank Dr. M'Alpin for the order upon his agents, which the doctor had sent him, declining, at the same time, to make use of it, as he informed Dr. M'Alpin that, upon his arrival in Calcutta, he found he had more money of his own in his agent's hands than was sufficient for his present purposes. These letters were followed by one from Mr. Curzon, who sincerely sympathized in the dangers and losses of the friends in whom he was so much interested. Captain Landless had dined with him, and given him a particular account of all their sufferings. Major Middleton was in the habit of coming almost every evening to dine with him, and hear what intelligence he had received of "his good friend the doctor." Young Ouseley, he told them, had left him to join his corps in the upper provinces; Mrs. Harvey was still reposing on her couch, and Mr. Ascot's eight children running about wild, just as usual.

"I have gotten a house for you, Eleonora," said the doctor, one day, when he returned home to tiffin, "which will serve ye for the next four months; and I hope that ye are ready to take possession, and that your trunks are packed, for to-morrow morning the Ruthven Castle's anchor will be up."

"To-morrow morning! Dr. M'Alpin, is it possible? am I really to leave India? How curious, that to-morrow night I shall sleep upon the sea."

"What cabin have you got, doctor?" inquired Mrs. Cheapstow.

"One of the booby hatches, just opposite to yours. I have told them to make it comfortable for our little lassie; and I just stepped into a cabinet-maker's, as I came through the Black Town, to order what was wanted; and I got a nice little hanging bookshelf with doors, to keep your books from rolling about, Eleonora; and I got some books, too, for you to read: ye ken ye mustna be idle."

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"And did you take all that trouble for me, Dr. M'Alpin? I should like to read night and day, that I might learn something of what every other person knows."

The morning came, and Eleonora saw the time of embarkation, to which she had looked as the commencement of a brighter era in her life, at length arrive, and for the first time she actually stood on the very brink of that sea which she had often feared would be to her forever an impassable barrier, and she listened with dread to the hoarse murmurs of the formidable surf which ran along the shore, breaking in deafening clamours on the beach, and casting up all it encountered on its way, "high and dry," as the seamen expressed it.

Going through the surf, which for several hundred miles runs along the Madras coast, is, even to those best acquainted with it, always an operation of danger, and to strangers an exceedingly formidable undertaking, particularly in going out to the ships in the roads; as, in consequence of the violence with which it breaks, they cannot lie near the shore, and no boats but the frail craft of the country, constructed of bark sewed together, which yields, in a manner, to the weight of the water, have ever been able to weather the surf. Possibly something may also be due to the boatmen, who, bred from infancy to the profession, know the exact place and moment when the swell will break. Every ship's boat which has tried it has been swamped in the experiment, and many experienced seamen lost, notwithstanding the catamarans which follow every boat that crosses the surf, to be at hand to pick up the passengers, should the boat go down, an accident which the slightest neglect or oversight invariably occasions.

These catamarans are nothing more than two boards lashed together, and rowed by two men with short paddles, which they move alternately, first on the one side and then on the other, so as to produce a very droll effect, singing all the time.

It is difficult to conceive a more busy and noisy scene than Madras Roads, when there are many ships at anchor, from the immense number of these small craft, mounting like cockleshells on the foaming surfs, which in regular succession break along the shore. The men who navigate them are the letter-carriers and messengers between the ships and the town and often go backward and forward when nothing larger dare venture through the surf. When a wave washes these "catamaran-jacks," as the sailors have named them, from their seats on their skiffs, they yield to the fury of the water, and, as soon as it has passed, like ducks who have dived for a moment, leap upon their catamarans and recommence singing their own song, which is peculiar to the whole amphibious race, with perfect composure, until the next wave washes them off.

The accommodation-boats, intended for the conveyance of ladies, get their name from their having a seat at one end covered with an awning, and a board to keep the feet out of the water, which leaks into these spongy vessels so as to require incessant baling. That for our friends was in readiness upon the beach above the high-water mark, wherein they soon seated themselves, and were waiting for the boatmen, who

were slowly sauntering along the beach. "Look at those fellows," said the doctor; "I cannot help laughing when I mind what happened on that very spot when I arrived here a griffin* thirty years ago. Two of my countrymen belonging to a Scotch regiment had just landed, a Highland and a Lowland officer, and I overheard the Highlander ask his friend, pointing to a turtle which happened to be lying on his back and flapping his fins in the sun, 'What na kind o' a bird ca' ye he?' 'I dinna ken,' answered the Lowlander, 'but he maun be a pet, for his wings are clippit.' I never laughed more in my life; but here our fellows come at last."

The crew seized the boat by the prow, and dragged her with great rapidity down the steep bank over the sand into the water, and then jumping in themselves, without losing an instant, seized the oars, and all shouting together, "Ullah! Ullah! Ullah! Ullah!" rowed with their utmost energy, and shot through the first surf. When it had passed under them they lay-to for a few minutes in the hollow of the sea, chanting a few notes as if to keep them in time, but all the while keeping a watchful eye upon the second surf, and, as soon as the favourable moment presented itself, a second dart was made, and they cleared it, and the catamaran-jacks who had been washed from their seats regained their rafts, which were dancing about in the swell.

"There's a fine fellow," said the doctor, observing one of them, who seized his vagrant catamaran and jumped into his seat as easily as a dragon would have done into his saddle; "there's a fine fellow, and well worthy of the medals he wears."

"Yes," answered the head boatman, who spoke a little English; "he has done a great deal of work in his life: every medal round his neck was given to him for a life saved in the surf."

"But he'll no go without his reward," said the doctor, "when we reach the ship."

Another roll carried them clear of the surf without accident, and the boatmen took up their monotonous song, which they chanted without farther interruption. When they reached the ship, both gentlemen took care that all those who had followed them through the surf should be liberally rewarded, as an encouragement to them to attend upon other boats, where their assistance might be really requisite.

Colonel Cheapstow, ill as he was before he left Madras, had still taken care to replace the comforts which had gone to the bottom of the Andaman's, and, after he had been a few weeks at sea, gradually recovered the health he had lost upon that unfortunate occasion, and before they had rounded the Cape had gained as much in appearance as he had in strength.

Dr. McAlpin's principal pleasure on board ship had been to assist Eleonora in her reading; he had, as he told her before they came on board, purchased several books expressly for her use, and had infinite satisfaction in instructing her in history and geography—knowledge which had not before come within her reach, and which, to a mind like hers, was as interesting as it was new.

"Good sense and right feeling," he used to

* Term applied to those who have not been a day or a year in this country.

say to Mrs. Cheapstow, "are worth all the accomplishments in the world. Let Eleonora just cultivate the powers of mind which nature has given her, and obtain worthy objects to exercise her thoughts and reasoning faculties, and she will be worth a bushel of those who pride themselves upon what they call their accomplishments; not that I am an enemy to accomplishments either, but in our day too much is sacrificed to them."

"You must not forget," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, "that Eleonora is now our child, and that both Cheapstow and I love her as if she really were so, and that we would wish that she should make the appearance in society which is indispensable; and I must certainly, as soon as we are in London, give her masters."

"But dinna forget that Eleonora is now past the age when these things are begun, and it would be a great pity to lose the time which at present she can put to much better purpose; at all events, if she were mine, I would not try to teach her any of these things unless she showed a very particular inclination for them—genius, as people call it."

"But it will be expected," joined the colonel, "that Miss Cheapstow should have a more elegant education, more suitable to her situation in life."

"There is nothing so suitable for everybody's situation in life as to know how to conduct themselves rightly in it, and I will just go back to what I first said: if ye had got Eleonora when she was little, there is no reason why you should not have taught her whatever you liked; but now it would be wasting her precious time to begin with such things; and she has a mind that will do honour to any situation, and procure more respect for her than all the shining acquisitions in the world."

"That would be the case, my excellent friend," replied Mrs. Cheapstow, "if the world were half as good or as wise as you are; but that not being the case, we must, if we would keep our situation in it, sacrifice something for the taste of the times. Now I agree with you in thinking that it will be better not to plague Eleonora with accomplishments, unless, as you say, she should show a genius for them."

"Eleonora is a good, dutiful girl," said the colonel, "and I am perfectly pleased with her as she is; but I would wish, at the same time, that she knew those things which would place her upon a proper footing in the opinion of others; however, do as you please, my dear; you are a better judge of what is fit for girls."

"And I will, in the mean time, keep her at work just as usual," said the doctor. "Her improvement is a pleasure to me, and sometimes brings back to my mind what my sister was at her age. With the exception of a sweet voice, which could sing our ain bonny Scotch songs well, she had no more accomplishments than this poor lassie, though she had more book-learning."

"Having no children, I have never, perhaps, bestowed the attention upon things of the kind that I might otherwise have done," said Mrs. Cheapstow; "so follow your own plan, doctor."

Eleonora's days and weeks passed with pleasure and improvement, and in proportion as her mind opened to receive new ideas, she became

more cheerful. Brought up in circumstances to force care even on childish vivacity, and in a climate unfavourable to the flow of animal spirits, which is, in young and active minds, the almost constant concomitant of unimpaired health, melancholy had become, in a manner, the habit of her mind; and the good doctor, conscious, as he said, that there was "a time for all things," laboured to dispel a feeling which he regarded as injurious and premature.

"Let her have a fresh flow of ideas," he said to Mrs. Cheapstow; "let her read and know something of what has been done in the world, and the dark fogs which till this time have bounded her horizon will disappear. I like cheerfulness in young creatures as much as the sun in spring. Melancholy is the rust of the mind, and poisons the springs of health; there are shadows enough to every scene in this world, without dwelling on them at her years."

CHAPTER XII.

"How welcome from the dizzy mast,
The watchful seaman's stand,
Sounds o'er the billow and the blast
The joyful cry of "Land"—
Which, veiled within a misty shroud,
Lifts o'er the wave its peak of cloud!"

J. MALCOLM.

"You have never seen a mountain, Eleonora," said Dr. M'Alpin, as soon as he heard that land was in sight; "come with me on deck, and I will show you one."

"That is a cloud," said Eleonora, straining her eyes in the direction he pointed out to her.

"Look again," he said, "through this telescope, and tell me now what you see."

"An immense dark mass appearing above the clouds."

"Ay," answered the doctor. "Those are the mountains, then, of St. Helena."

Every moment, as the vessel held on her swift and steady way, the features of the island became more visible, the outlines more distinct, the lights and shadows more defined, and the peaks separated from each other, showing range within range, while Eleonora beheld with wonder nearly approaching to awe the extraordinary productions of Nature, which, from the rapidity of the vessel's motion, seemed almost to start out of the water before her.

Neither verdure softened nor herbage shaded the bare, bald forehead of these stupendous rocks, where they rose in barren nakedness and freshness, as if recently torn asunder by giant power, and exposed in all their inaccessibility to the war of the elements and force of the ocean. In vain the waves rolled in ceaseless succession on their immovable base, and broke in white spray on their rugged face, filling their flinty fissures with myriads of trickling streams; there was but one spot in the whole circuit of that stone-bound island where any communication could take place between the sea and the shore, and that spot was the little bay joining the narrow valley in which James Town lies.

When the Ruthven Castle came within gunshot of the formidable batteries which crown every point to which the labour of man has

sculptured a path, a gun pealed over their heads like a messenger from a higher sphere, commanding them to bring to until it was ascertained that there was no disorder on board to prevent their approach. When this necessary ceremonial was passed, they stood in shore, and soon came to anchor in face of the town, which lay in a long, straggling slip up the narrow valley at the head of the bay, the entrance guarded by strong fortifications and guns of heavy metal. *Ladder Hill*, which takes its name from the zigzag route which incredible industry has graven on its otherwise inaccessible sides, stands sentinel on the right of the landing, wreathed with cannon, sufficient to blow any ship out of the water which dared to approach without permission given. The left of the little harbour is also defended by the same formidable artillery. Imagination cannot picture anything more imposing than the appearance of these rocky mountains, their rugged feet washed by the open ocean, and their bare summits crowned by the engines of death, able to discharge their shafts, like the bolts of heaven, from an elevation which makes retaliation or resistance equally hopeless.

Eleonora could not define her feelings as she gazed upon this scene. It suggested ideas new and delightful, and, with the earnest anticipation of unbroken hope, she longed for a nearer examination of a place which had attracted more of her attention than any other had ever done. Her mind had lately opened to the reception of ideas whose novelty deepened their impression; she felt the world to be full of beauty, and magnificence, and grandeur, and she believed that, if she could inspect it more minutely, she would find it more lovely. Dr. M'Alpin had, perhaps without intending it, brought forward this latent feeling; for enthusiasm naturally elicits a corresponding emotion in those minds where Nature has placed it, dormant though it may have remained. His poetic taste had not, in his ordinary intercourse with the world, found much room for indulgence; his excellent friends, Col. and Mrs. Cheapstow, with whom so many years of his life had been passed, laughed at this as one of his little weaknesses.

Though both good people in their own separate way, the *beau-ideal*, natural or moral, made no part of their speculations; consequently, the worthy doctor was much delighted to find that in Eleonora he had a pupil who would hear all his opinions without criticism, and take pleasure in his readings and recitations, and listen with unwearying attention to his descriptions of the beauties of his own country, which he promised himself great pleasure some day in showing her. To those who have no experience of how the doctor's life had passed at a distance from his own family, and from the society of young people in general, it may seem strange that, at his years, he should feel such a lively interest, without any selfish motive, in a creature of Eleonora's age, or, at least, that he should choose her as the participator of his favourite fancies, but so it was; and Mrs. Cheapstow often laughingly declared to her adopted daughter that she would be jealous of her regard for Dr. M'Alpin.

As soon as the vessel was at anchor, the passengers prepared to go on shore; fortunately

for the lovers of the picturesque, they had a general officer among the number, who, landing in full uniform, was received with the salute due to his rank; the guns boomed overhead, and wreaths of white smoke and multiplied echoes ran round the mountains. They landed on a little quay cut out of the rock, the steps of which are wet and slippery, from the continual breaking of the surf. On the left of this landing-place, a large cave, hollowed out of the rock which towers above, and bedded by hard, white sand, affords the only bathing-place on the island.

Landed on the beach, our party stopped for a moment to regard the formidable line of cannon extending across this single inlet. It was impossible not to admire the curious mixture of rural quiet and military strength, joined to the most remarkable neatness and economy of space. Where a habitation could be planted or a garden excavated, the encroachment has been made, and they hang over each other in terraces covered with trailing plants. In all other places Nature seems freely to have afforded surface for the habitation of man—in St. Helena alone he seems to be an unwelcome intruder upon her particular domain.

Colonel Cheapstow, with his family, walked up to one of the principal boarding-houses, and soon secured accommodation for the time they were to remain on shore. In a place like James Town, the arrival of Indianen, either from England or India, is too important an event not to be generally known, and Colonel Cheapstow and Dr. M'Alpin had not been an hour in their new lodging before they received visits from the principal officers in the garrison, and numerous hospitable invitations.

Among these visitants was a handsome young man in a naval uniform, who, as soon as the ceremonies of introduction were over, addressed the doctor.

"I was in hopes, sir, when I heard your name, that you were from Bengal, but I find your ship is from Madras."

"We are last from Madras; but who of my name do you inquire for in Bengal?" answered the doctor, earnestly gazing upon the open and expressive countenance before him. "I think I should know your features," he said, with some emotion; "but who did you inquire for?"

"Dr. James M'Alpin, the brother of my mother."

The doctor rose, and folded the young man in his arms. "And is it even so?" he said. "I could not be mistaken in the features of my sister's son: this is a happiness I little expected. And what am I to call you? Are ye Hugh, the eldest?"

"No, my dear uncle," answered his nephew, warmly returning the doctor's cordial grasp, "I have not that good fortune. I am but the laird's brother, plain Malcolm Sinclair, or, if you like it better, Lieutenant Sinclair, of his majesty's ship *Seaflower*."

"Mrs. Cheapstow, Miss Cheapstow," said the doctor, turning to the ladies, who had quietly enjoyed this mutual recognition, "allow me to present to you my sister's son, my nephew, Lieutenant Sinclair."

Mrs. Cheapstow felicitated both uncle and

nephew on their fortunate meeting. Eleonora courtesied to the stranger, and told the doctor, in a low voice, how happy she was in an event which would give him so much pleasure. Colonel Cheapstow shook hands with Mr. Sinclair, whom he said he could not consider as a stranger, being so nearly connected with one of his oldest and dearest friends.

The young man, happy in the discovery he had just made, received the kindness of his new friends with the open frankness of an affectionate heart, and the gentlemanly ease of an independent character.

Mrs. Cheapstow, who was an attentive observer of what had passed, saw at once that the doctor had not only found his sister's son, whom, if he had been different to what he appeared to be, he would rejoice to find, because he could call him by that epithet, but a nephew who was worthy of affection for his own sake, and whose manners and appearance were equally prepossessing. Mrs. Cheapstow had remarked the expression of his countenance and the tone of his voice when he spoke of his mother, and heard her mentioned by his uncle, and felt convinced that at that moment his heart rejoiced in seeing the brother of his beloved parent, whom he was prepared to love and respect.

"In this youth, at least," she thought, "he will have one relative who will see more merit in him than his immense fortune, and I am happy to think that there is at least one in his family who resembles himself. If we had the good fortune, Cheapstow," she said, "to have such a son as that to meet us, how different would be our return to our native land!"

The doctor and his nephew had retired to give and receive intelligence of domestic concerns, and did not again make their appearance until the hour of dinner, when the doctor, as usual, handed Mrs. Cheapstow to table, leaving Eleonora to the care of his nephew. They dined at the *table d'hôte* of their own house, where there were several strangers, Colonel Cheapstow taking his place, as he always did, between the ladies of his own party.

Dr. M'Alpin, as soon as he was seated, began speaking to Mrs. Cheapstow of his nephew, in whom he seemed to fancy he had recovered his lost sister.

"Would you believe it, Mrs. Cheapstow," he said, "I had not been half an hour with that boy before I began speaking to him as I used to do with his mother! I could not help thinking that my own dear Marian was come back to me. His sentiments and his expressions are just hers; he is something older, to be sure, than she was when we parted, but the likeness is wonderful; he has her generosity of feeling and warmth of heart, and he seems, too, to have steadiness and judgment above his years, though we must not altogether look for an old head upon young shoulders."

"Nothing," replied Mrs. Cheapstow, "for a long time has given me greater pleasure than this meeting, doctor. Cheapstow agrees with me in thinking that in this young man your sister has left you a valuable legacy."

The doctor regretted the impossibility of his nephew's accompanying him to England, as he belonged to one of the ships on duty in the roads, but which was soon expected to be re-

lieved, when it was probable she would return to Britain.

Malcolm Sinclair had in the mean time been entertaining Eleonora with an account of all that was to be seen in the island. "You must visit Longwood, Miss Cheapstow," he said, "and make a pilgrimage to Napoleon's grave."

"I hope we shall," answered Eleonora; "your uncle talked of it before we landed."

"Oh, if it depends on him," said Malcolm, "it will soon be settled; I shall not let him forget it. What do you do to-morrow?"

"Go to the governor's, I believe, for there is an invitation for us."

"I know General and Mrs. Monkland perfectly well, and I have a general invitation to the house," replied Malcolm, "therefore I shall have the pleasure to attend you; and next day, if there is nothing better to be done, we must beat up the island for conveyances, and set forth on our excursion. I assure you it will repay you for your trouble."

"I have not the least doubt of it," answered Eleonora, who found herself talking with as much freedom to the doctor's nephew as she had been in the habit of doing lately with himself. "I have earnestly wished to see this island since Dr. M'Alpin described it to me, and have been delighted with it from the first moment we came in sight of its rocky shores. These are the first mountains I have ever seen, and yet, when I did see them, they brought back something to my mind like a dream, as if I had known such things before."

"Some minds are made to receive powerful impressions of the great beauties of Nature, and give back the reflection like a mirror. I suppose, Miss Cheapstow, that is the case with you?"

"I wish it may be so," answered Eleonora, unconscious of the implied compliment, "for then in this beautiful world I shall have pleasure without end."

The air with which Eleonora spoke had the stamp of such perfect sincerity, that her auditor could not help wondering where she had lived to have such expectations. He was accustomed to the frankness and simplicity of many of his own countrywomen, who, in the retirement of their straitened domestic circle, rarely imagine anything but the *beau-ideal* of human nature, but such entire want of knowledge of the world he had never before met with.

"You must have seen a great deal of India, Miss Cheapstow?" he inquired.

"No; since I can remember, literally nothing. I do not know that twice in my life I was ever out of the compound of our house at Madras. I saw the sea from the top of the house, and oh! how often and how earnestly I have wished to be a bird, and to fly over it, and see what was on the other side, or to be in one of the ships that ran along so beautifully!"

Malcolm's curiosity was greatly excited by this account of absolute seclusion, but he felt it would be taking an ungenerous advantage to satisfy the desire he had by asking farther questions, and he resolved to restrain it until he had an opportunity of talking with his uncle.

When that was the case, in the course of the evening, he received a full detail of all the particulars known and conjectured regarding poor

Eleonora's mysterious fate, and, with the spirit of his years, was highly delighted with the part Mrs. Cheapstow and his uncle had acted in the first instance, and Colonel Cheapstow in the second. The idea of her marrying, in such circumstances, was sacrilege in his eyes, and he was almost disposed to quarrel with any one for repeating such a presumptuous absurdity. This history lost nothing by being told by the doctor; nor did he forget to recount the amiable traits he had observed in Eleonora's character, in support of his opinion that she was by birth a gentlewoman; and he concluded by saying, "There is a purity in her mind which is not often found in any situation, and is least of all to be looked for where she came from; but it just teaches us, Malcolm, that nature will not be at all times broken down or rooted up by circumstances. She sees everything in the pure light of her own guileless disposition, and expects all things to be without spot."

"I think," answered Malcolm, "that our dispositions form a kind of medium of vision, if we may use the phrase, through which we see the world, and everything in it—the different lights within colour the objects without."

"There is no doubt of it, Malcolm, and it is only experience which undeceives us."

Next morning, the governor, according to his promise, politely sent one of his carriages to convey his expected guests to his seat, at some miles distance from the capital of his seagirt isle. Eleonora had been up at an early hour, to mark the singular appearance of the rising sun, which Mr. Sinclair had described to her. The valley, or rather ravine, in which James Town stands, is so narrow and deep, that the bright rays of the morning sun gild the mountain-tops overhead while it was night in the town below, a peculiar and picturesque effect, which is, perhaps, only to be witnessed in St. Helena.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The gaudy gloss of fortune only strikes
The vulgar eye: the suffrage of the wise,
The praise that's worth ambition, is bestow'd
By sense alone, and dignity of mind."

ARMSTRONG.

As soon as breakfast was over the party set forth, Colonel Cheapstow and the ladies occupying the carriage, Dr. M'Alpin and his nephew attending them on horseback, and riding up by the windows to reassure Mrs. Cheapstow, who had been so long accustomed to the level roads of India that she was terrified at the sight of the precipitous route which lay before them.

Every road in the island has been cut with infinite labour round the steep sides of the mountains, overhanging deep valleys, without even a parapet to stand between the timid traveller and the streams which roar below. Eleonora looked out with eager curiosity upon the striking changes which every turn of the road placed before them, and the romantic little villas scattered about on the bosom of the mountains, and wondered how Mrs. Cheapstow could rejoice in coming to the termination of so charming a ride.

When they did arrive, they found the whole family at home to receive them, and much

pleased at finding Mr. Sinclair of the party. The house is large and low, having all its apartments on the ground-floor, surrounded with trellis-work, and covered with vines; the garden, into which several of the windows open, is well shaded by vines and flowering shrubs, though there are but few trees on the island.

Mrs. Monkland and her daughters took more trouble to entertain their visitors than could, perhaps, have been expected in a situation where the arrival of strangers was more frequent. At one time during Napoleon's life, when there was a larger armed force on the island, and several ships of war in the roads, there had been a greater variety in the society of the place; now everything had fallen to the dead calm of a peace establishment, or perhaps it would be nearer truth to say, risen to the state of almost open warfare, which, unhappily, too often divides those who are separated from the rest of the world, and who have little resource but in the good offices of each other. Some of the colonists brought up on the island were not considered as *society* by the rest; others, whose wealth formed their only claim to consideration, presumed too much upon it, and official authorities often despising the one, and treating the other with contempt, enjoyed their lawful dignities in unbroken loneliness. Now the arrival of strangers for a time hushed these little domestic broils, which had abundance of time to run over, in all their acrimony, when there was nothing else to do; and our friends, for the little while they remained, only saw the holiday face of things.

The gentlemen repaired to the billiard-room to enjoy the favourite exercise of hot climates; and the two younger Miss Monklands, with their guitars, took Eleonora into the bower in the garden they liked the best, leaving the matrons in the quiet possession of the drawing-room.

"I never heard Mr. Sinclair talk of his uncle before," said Miss Helen Monkland to Eleonora, in the pause of her sister's song; "where did he meet with him?"

"The meeting was, I fancy, equally unexpected upon both sides," answered Eleonora. "Dr. M'Alpin came from India with us, and had no idea of finding his nephew here."

"How charming that must have been: but do you intend to take Mr. Sinclair to England with you?"

"I fear not," answered Eleonora, with her usual simplicity. "I fear he cannot go with us."

"He would think himself a lucky man," said Miss Helen, with an air of pique, "if he heard your fears on the subject, Miss Cheapstow."

"Why should he?" said Eleonora, without altering her tone; "his uncle wishes him to go, and he regrets very much himself that it is not in his power."

"We are highly flattered by his regrets, certainly," answered Miss Helen.

"It is perfectly natural, I think," said Eleonora.

"Yes, perfectly natural," answered Miss Amelia Monkland, "and perfectly natural, too, that Miss Cheapstow should think so."

Eleonora saw that she had, in some way displeased the two sisters, though she did not exactly know how. She had something to learn of the vanity which could interpose its absurd pretensions against reason and duty.

Miss Amelia Monkland sang again, and at the close of her song her sister resumed the conversation: "Is the old doctor rich, since his nephew is so anxious to be with him?"

"Yes, I believe so; I think I have heard Mrs. Cheapstow say that he has a very large fortune; but what has that to do with his nephew's wishing to be with him?"

"Oh, then you think," retorted the inquirer, "that he has another reason more cogent still?"

"Certainly—I think that he is very much attached to his uncle."

"Then you believe in love at first sight?" said Miss Helen, maliciously. "I must differ with you, and confess my unbelief of anything of the kind."

"I have never thought of the subject," answered Eleonora; "but it seems so natural to me that he should be attached to such an excellent person as the doctor."

"Now tell us truly," joined Miss Amelia, "whether it is the uncle or the nephew you think the excellent person, Miss Cheapstow?"

"Both," answered Eleonora.

"With all her simplicity, you will make nothing of her," whispered Miss Amelia to Miss Helen; "she has too much self-command for you."

The conversation was continued for some time longer in the same strain; the Miss Monklands indulged themselves in saying a great many things to tease a guest whom they seemed beforehand to be inclined to consider as a rival. Having speculating views themselves, they could not suppose another to be without them, and had been, to use an expression of their own, employing their telescope to look out; but Miss Helen, notwithstanding her practice in this sort of amusement, had not been able to make any discovery but that the uncle was rich, to which she prudently and judiciously resolved to set down Malcolm's wish to return to England, as she recollected hearing him say, two nights ago, that St. Helena was one of the most charming places he had ever been in.

There were several gentlemen of higher rank than his among the company at dinner, and to his modesty she again imputed his letting one of them have the honour of conducting her to table, while he attended Miss Cheapstow. "He has been accustomed to society," she thought, "and cannot be pleased with an unpractised girl like that." She sat on the same side of a crowded table, and therefore did not see that Malcolm appeared, at least, as well pleased as he had ever been in the house, and seemed to relish the conversation he listened to quite as much as he had ever done any which had flowed from more practised lips.

Colonel Cheapstow equally enjoyed the green fat of a fine turtle, which General Monkland had received as a present from a ship from the Island of Ascension; he forgot, in the variety of fish with which the table was covered, that he was on a spot where no man dared to kill his own beef without the governor's permission.

"I have not tasted anything so delicious for a long time," said the colonel; "do, Mrs. Monkland, let me recommend a little of it to you. It is worth coming to St. Helena for such a turtle as this."

"I am happy, Colonel Cheapstow," answered the lady, "that you find anything in our island worth coming for."

"Everything, madam, everything—but the world cannot match this turtle; had the cook used old London Particular, which had made two voyages, it would have been absolutely incomparable."

"I can assure you, colonel, that our Madeira is seven years old; but I cannot answer that it has voyaged just as far as it ought to have done."

"That makes a most material difference, madam; I understand those things; allow me the pleasure to send you on shore a small quantity of mine, and you will see at once what I mean. You are here in the way of having such turtle, that it is absolutely a kind of treason to serve them with less than the dignity to which they are entitled."

There are some men in the world so devoted to their art, that they would willingly promote it with all their power, for the disinterested satisfaction of knowing that the thing was done as it ought to be. Now of this order was Colonel Cheapstow; and though his art was not as much esteemed by the whole of the world as it seems in a fair way to become, if it continues to gain ground, as it is daily doing, and comes to be generally received as one of the elegant accomplishments of polite society, yet he had so much the public-spirited love for it, it was an actual suffering for him to think that a fine subject, whether fowl, fish, or flesh, should come into hands unable to do it justice, or should lose anything of its full effect for want of the fittest materials. It was therefore in vain that Mrs. Monkland protested against the offered refinement. Colonel Cheapstow told her that he should blame himself as often as he recollected her delicious turtle, if he had not done all in his power towards their perfection in future: "However," he ended by saying, "your cook does deserve the Star of the Legion of Honour for his *chef d'œuvre*, even as it is."

The doctor, who had heard the last phrase across the table, took up the conversation.

"We put off setting out on our pilgrimage to the place where that misguiding star conducted its votary, Mrs. Monkland, until we should have the advantage of your advice and direction."

"If you will go by my advice, Dr. M'Alpin, use your influence, and persuade the ladies to remain here to-night, and in the morning we shall muster all our cavalry for the conveyance of the party. You know there is but *one* hack vehicle on the island, and the proprietor has so often farmwork to do for his horses that you can never be sure of it."

The proposal was accepted with the greatest pleasure, and a messenger despatched to bring up the servants and requisite baggage from James Town.

Finding that her guests had consented to pass the night at Plantation House, Mrs. Monkland, as soon as she left the dining-room, sent out invitations for the evening to all the villas within reach, and soon assembled a dancing party. This was an amusement, however, in which Eleonora took no part, for the simple reason that she had not learned.

"Not dance!" said Miss Helen, running up to her when she saw that she refused every invitation; "it cannot be that you do not like dancing?"

"I really do not know how I should like it," answered Eleonora, "for I never tried."

"My dear creature, where have you lived? Have you convents in your part of the world, since you have never seen dancing?"

Mr. Sinclair saw that Eleonora's sincerity would be no match for the inquisitive malice of her interrogator, and answered for her, "You forget the climate, Miss Helen, and you have

also the cruelty to forget poor Heathcote, who is waiting—I cannot say *patiently*—for you to begin the dance. I hope this forgetfulness will not extend to the second, else I shall be the sufferer."

Miss Helen tripped away, half consoled for the necessity of leaving Malcolm Sinclair to talk with Eleonora during the first set. The whole thing was so perfectly new to her, that her observations could not fail to excite the curiosity of those who were unacquainted with the seclusion in which she had lived. Malcolm felt that, if made to any other person, they would make abundance of idle conjecture and prying inquiry, and he sat for a few moments hesitating in his mind how he should warn her against it. During this time Miss Helen Monkland looked round, and saw with great pleasure that he was sitting in an absent and abstracted attitude.

"Will you be displeased, Miss Cheapstow," he said, after a pause, "if I tell you what I was thinking of?"

"No, certainly," answered Eleonora.

"And you will not think that I am impertinent if I presume to give you my advice and opinion?"

"I think," said Eleonora, "you were going to disapprove of what I said just now about dancing."

"I have not the presumption to disapprove—I was only going to observe—"

"Well, well," answered Eleonora, interrupting him, "it does not signify about the word; I said something that I had better not have said; and, to say the truth, so many questions have been asked since I came here, that I wish I knew how to stop them."

"With regard to dancing," said Malcolm, "no one has a right to know more than that you do not choose to dance, Miss Cheapstow."

"When you go away," returned Eleonora, "I will try to get beside Mrs. Cheapstow."

This was said in a tone of such confiding simplicity, as if she felt that his presence was a support to her, that Malcolm could not help for a moment being flattered by it, though the next instant he recollected that she had put him exactly upon the same footing with Mrs. Cheapstow.

"The world and its ways are so strange to me," she added, "that I make constant blunders when I am left to myself. I never used to be ashamed of the school in which I was brought up. Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow, and your uncle, did not regard me the less for it, and yet all this day I have felt uncomfortable about it—how is that?"

"No one, Miss Cheapstow," he replied, answering the direct question, "likes to be the object of prying curiosity; and to a person of your integrity and delicacy of mind, I can easily imagine how distressing it must be."

Eleonora coloured, and felt as if she had made another blunder in inducing a young man, even though Dr. M'Alpin's nephew, to pay compliments to her.

Malcolm saw what was passing in her mind, and hastened to dispel the idea. "I trust to your goodness, Miss Cheapstow, to pardon the liberty I have taken. I have been speaking to you just as if I were my uncle."

Eleonora smiled, and Malcolm felt that he had regained his lost ground.

When the dance was ended, and he left her to claim the fair hand of Miss Helen Monkland for the next set, Eleonora made her way to Mrs.

Cheapstow, while Miss Helen catechized her partner.

"And who is this Miss Cheapstow?" she asked; "I find she is not their daughter."

"That I do not know," returned Malcolm, answering the letter and not the spirit of the inquiry. "Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow seem very much attached to her."

"I am dying with curiosity to know who she can be, for I have never met with a girl of her age in my life who seems to know so little of the world she is in. Can you tell me how or where she has been brought up?"

"In India, I believe, very retiredly: the *naivete* of her manner is quite enchanting."

"You will not find many people to join in your opinion, I think," said the young lady, with an air of scorn; "her manners are those of a child of four years old, who will do what she is bid, and come when she is called, and hold her tongue until she is spoken to."

"No bad thing," thought her hearer, though he gave his thoughts no tongue, but answered gallantly, "You must not expect, unless you would be called sanguine and romantic, that all the world are to possess the grace, and tact, and talents of Miss Helen Monkland."

"No, nor the adroit politeness of Mr. Sinclair," said the young lady, colouring and smiling at the same moment; for, though she had experience enough of the world to lay little well-set traps for compliments, she had not yet lived long enough in it to receive them without a little colour.

Malcolm was assailed during the evening by repeated inquiries about Miss Cheapstow.

The Miss Monklands had circulated all their observations among their guests, and every one applied to him as the only person likely to know anything of the matter to whom a direct question could be addressed. His answers to other inquiries were not more satisfactory than they had been to Miss Helen; and as Eleonora stayed by Mrs. Cheapstow for the rest of the evening, there was no opportunity to worm the truth from her.

The company did not remain very late; for, considering the roads they had to take before they could, most of them, reach their own homes, it was indispensable to depart before the moon set; and Eleonora, fatigued with her *début* in mixed society, was very glad to retreat to her own apartment. Here, however, the two Miss Monklands followed her, upon pretence of seeing that she had all she required for the morning's toilet.

"I observed you were talking a great deal, Miss Cheapstow," said Miss Amelia Monkland, "with that old Scotch oddity, Dr. McAlpin."

Eleonora looked surprised at hearing one whom she was accustomed to see treated with love and respect so disrespectfully spoken of.

"I beg your pardon," Miss Amelia continued, remarking Eleonora's look, "I did not know that he was any relation of yours."

"He is no relation of mine," replied Eleonora, "but one of my best friends."

The expression again waked Miss Helen's spleen: "You are fortunate indeed to have so many friends in the same family," she said, ironically.

The jeer fell harmless, for it was unfelt; and Eleonora only answered, "I do promise myself much pleasure in seeing the rest of the family at Fernbraes."

"Who is the family, and where is Fernbraes?" demanded Miss Amelia.

"Fernbraes is the doctor's estate in Scotland, where I expect to meet the rest of his family, Mr. Sinclair's father and sisters."

"I understood from his captain to-night," observed Miss Helen, "that there is not the most distant probability of his ship's being ordered to England, and that they have a chance of remaining here for a long time."

This remark was made with the intention of sounding her visitor, but it was unproductive; Eleonora answered with her usual good faith, "Since he cannot go with his uncle, I am very happy that he is to remain here, for the first time I saw him he told me how much he was delighted with St. Helena."

"You are a strange girl, and unlike any one I have ever met with," answered Helen Monkland; "but it is high time that we should leave you to the rest of which you seem so much in need. Good-night, and sleep quietly until I send to call you in the morning."

When the Miss Monklands had reached their own apartment, they found Stitchwell, their maid, waiting for them with a face of pleased importance. "Only think, ladies!" she began, as she took out the black pins, one after another, which fastened the flowers in Miss Amelia's hair; "only think, the strange news I have heard from Mrs. Cheapstow's ayah."

"What did you hear, Stitchwell? Let us have it," answered both sisters at once.

"Well, if it is not one of the most wonderful things—but, Miss Helen, in all my born days, I never saw you look so well before! Is it not true, Miss Amelia? I always told Miss Helen that that pink dress is the most becoming dress in the world, and everybody allows that I know something of these things."

"Never mind the pink dress now, Stitchwell, but tell us what you have heard—quick, there's a good body."

"Ay, that's your way, Miss Helen; I am a good body when you want anything from me, and a tiresome body when I can't find things in drawers and boxes, where it would never enter into the head of mortal to look for them, and a cross body when I can't do more than one pair of hands ever did."

"And a dear body when you do what you are bid quickly," said Miss Helen, who knew from experience the value of a little well-timed flattery.

"It is all of a sudden that I have become so," answered the waiting-woman, who was resolved to have something more than words for information, which she had her own reasons for supposing would be welcome. "You thought me a very unreasonable body when I asked for that old India muslin gown just to make a cap, which I am sure is all that it is fit for."

"Take the gown and welcome, Stitchwell, if that will content you," answered her young mistress.

"I thank you, miss," she replied, dropping her best courtesy; "and so you know, miss, as I was telling you after dinner, when you gave me an inkling that this miss, whom everybody says is the greatest beauty that ever was seen on the island—though you may believe I do not think so, nor a certain person, I am sure, Miss Helen—but, as I was saying, when you gave me an inkling that she was not Colonel Cheapstow's daughter, I resolved to worm it all out of the

ayah, poor black soul, for they see and know more than people dream of. You have no notion, ladies, what a world of curious things these creatures know."

"But what did this one know; tell us that, Stitchwell?"

"I am coming to it as fast as I can."

"You will lose your thread and our patience if you go on at this rate, Stitchwell."

"And so I say to the ayah, just as if I knew all about it, 'and when did this young lady come to your mistress?' 'She come my mistress house at Madras.' Just think of the creature's way of speaking English; and, says I, 'Did she come from England?' 'No,' said she; but I cannot repeat all her gibberish, and will just give her answer in plain English; she came from—where do you think, ladies?"

"How should we know, who have never been in the country?" said Miss Helen, impatiently. "Tell at once, do, if there is anything to tell, and don't keep us here all night."

"Then would you believe such a fine lady came from the Orphan School?"

"A charity girl!" said Miss Helen.

"A charity girl!" repeated her sister. "We are really much honoured by the society which Mrs. Cheapstow has introduced among us."

"But the most amusing part of the thing is," continued the informant, "that ayah tells me they are all so fond of her that they think nothing too good for her—some people are born with a silver spoon in their mouth—and that they will make her their heir."

"If that is the case, there must be some relationship; I wonder what it is!" said Miss Amelia.

"And she knew nothing of the ways of ladies and gentlemen when she came to Mrs. Cheapstow, and she set herself to teach her, and the old doctor set himself to teach her; and the proud colonel, nothing would serve him but he must needs have a finger in the pie, and they have all taught her, till she thinks herself equal to, and upon a footing with her betters; and when I politely offered to help her to take off her things, ladies, before you came to your room, she said her own servant was in waiting, forsooth! as if I wanted to wait upon her for any reason but to see and find out from herself if all ayah had told me was true; for them creatures is not to be trusted. And I wanted to see, too, if the old proverb was true, that 'what comes with the wind goes with the water;' for the ayah told me that she would give away her ears if they were loose."

"You may take the lace off my book-muslin—the lace, you know, which Mr. Sinclair tore in his awkwardness, picking up mamma's pocket-handkerchief."

"Oh! it is a sweet, pretty lace, and will make the most beautiful cap in the world. I may well say that anybody with half an eye would know that my young ladies is gentlewomen, by their way of doing things; the heart to give is always the mark of a true lady—none of your upstart misses, too proud to exchange a word with them that's perhaps better than themselves. To please you, young ladies, I'll try what I can make of the doctor's man. My name is not Stitchwell if I don't find out from him what his master had to do in this matter."

"The old man will be too hard for you," said Miss Amelia, willing to pique the inquiries of the inquisitor to their utmost exertion.

"If he were as hard as the rocks of St. Hele-

na, I'll find a way to make something of him, never fear," answered Stitchwell, as she finished her services and tucked in the moscheto-curtains.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Plôt aux dieux que vous eussiez vu de quel zèle
Cette troupe entreprend une action si belle!"

CORNEILLE.

Our friends, fortunately for themselves, had arrived at St. Helena at the coolest season of the year, consequently the most favourable for the little excursion they projected; and the day promised to be so cloudy, that all the ladies joined the party with the exception of Mrs. Monkland, who said she had seen the place so often, that she would willingly resign her seat to some of the young people, provided the company would return to Plantation House to dinner; an arrangement which was eagerly seconded by her daughters, and soon carried into effect.

In the morning, when Mrs. Cheapstow's ayah was occupied about her mistress's toilet, she took the opportunity, fearing that she had not been quite prudent in her communications to Stitchwell, to give her own account of the matter. She had been many years in Mrs. Cheapstow's service, and therefore presumed a little upon her favour: she spoke in Hindostanee. "Oh mem, such a country my eyes have never seen, and such sort of people who want to know everything."

"I forgot to give you my orders, ayah, before we left the ship, that you were not to speak one word to anybody of what does not concern you, and I hope you have not done it."

"Oh mem, I would never do such work," answered the ayah, with an air of the most respectful confidence. "What am I, that I should think in my heart, much less speak with my mouth of what it is my mistress's pleasure that no one should look on."

"Take care that you do not tell me a falsehood, and then questions will not signify," answered her mistress.

"Mem speaks the words of truth; but Cussim Ali, the doctor sahib's servant, who knows if he will be so wise?"

"Cussim Ali is not a child to talk like women," returned Mrs. Cheapstow; "there is no fear of him."

The mortified favourite felt every praise bestowed upon another as taken from herself, and answered with an air as if she knew more than she intended to tell: "Cussim Ali is an old fool, whose long beard is good for nothing but to make mischief, and if he has not told Miss Elora's tale, all will be well."

"Tie your own tongue," said her mistress, "and do not trouble yourself about him."

Mrs. Stitchwell had, in conformity with her last night's intention, stopped for a moment, before her young ladies' bell rung, with Cussim Ali, who was brushing his master's boots, just to ask him, if he would not have one of the house-servants to do that for him.

"No," answered Cussim; "there is nobody here who can please my master but myself."

"In cleaning boots, you mean," said the waiting-woman, laughing; "there is some whose company he likes better, or I'm mistaken."

The old Mussulman never laughed, and he hated it as an expression of feeling deserving his

utmost contempt; he drew back his head, swelled his nostrils, and answered without deigning to look on a person so little in his opinion.

"What is that to you?"

"Nothing in the world," replied the persevering inquirer, who was not to be foiled at the first attack; "but, when you were talking of pleasing your master, I thought it would be more likely that he should be pleased with such a beautiful young lady as Miss Cheapstow."

"My master knows as well as I do," answered Cussim Ali, scornfully, while he studiously kept his eyes from looking at the person to whom he was speaking, "that women were made but for servants and slaves, and that they are below the notice of wise men."

"Your master knows no such thing: that is the creed of your country, not his."

"Yes," said the Mussulman, who left off brushing his boot to curl his mustaches in his wrath, as he found that he had a good opportunity for discharging some of the vexation he was forced to submit to, when, in obedience to his master's orders, he was obliged to help the ladies first. "And if their tongues were cut, and their feet tied, there would be less mischief in the world: is it fit that creatures like you, who have no more sense than the young of a peacock, should go out and come in at your own pleasure, and laugh, too, like the chattering apes?"

He grinned in scorn at the very idea.

"But, for all your wisdom, and all your dignity, and all your gravity," exclaimed the exasperated waiting-maid, "you, Mr. Cussim Ali, you must wait upon European ladies *respectfully*, as becomes you, or get your ears well pulled by your master, as you deserve at this minute, for charging all your outlandish ideas upon an English gentleman!"

The Miss Monkland's bell rung, and Stitchwell, fairly defeated in her purpose, was obliged to attend its call, while the offended Mussulman stroked down his beard, first with one hand, and then with the other, as if he would smooth out the affronts he had received.

At this instant the ayah made her appearance, and commenced her attack by saying,

"I see very well, Cussim Ali, that you have been doing what you have no business to do, and telling the English ayah what she has no business to know."

"It is a lie as large as yourself!" said the Mussulman.

"Then it is you that made it," replied the dauntless ayah.

"Who are you, that dare give an answer before me?" retorted Cussim; "take your unlucky face out of my sight, which has been twice offended by the folly of women this morning; surely it is an omen of evil, and foretels misfortune—*begone*, I say!"

"Yes, you may speak of misfortune, Cussim Ali, when you have disobeyed your master, and gone against my mistress's pleasure, and forgot the colonel sahib's orders. You will find the wages of your work."

"You are too little for me to exchange words with, and lower than the dust below my feet," retorted the Mussulman, walking off with measured gravity, muttering between his shut teeth, as he went, on the folly and perversity of women in general, and the whole race of ayahs in particular.

The antagonist rested quite satisfied that, if anything of her imprudent communications came

up, she could turn it all over upon Cussim Ali, whom she hated for the reputation of fidelity he enjoyed, as she considered, to her detriment; and she wisely calculated that if her loquacity brought punishment, it would be much better that it should fall upon him than upon herself.

In the mean time Stitchwell hurried into her young ladies' apartment, her colour very much improved by the piquancy of the dialogue that had just passed.

"What a complexion you have, Stitchwell, and how your hand shakes!" observed Miss Amelia.

"And no wonder! I never was so provoked in my life;" and she ran glibly through the whole detail, acting Cussim Ali's acts of scorn, to the infinite amusement of her young mistresses.

When they had stopped laughing, Miss Amelia advised her to say nothing about the matter, "for mamma will be very little pleased to hear that you have been quarrelling with servants of the visitors, whatever may be the provocation."

"It is very hard that a person is obliged to put up with the insolence of a black creature like that—but you will be late, Miss Helen; there's Mrs. Cheapstow, up and dressed before I came here, and gone straight to miss's chamber: she makes as much fuss about her as if she was her own child, a hundred times—I wonder what it can mean; and there's Mr. Sinclair, singing in the garden like a skylark; I wish he could hear that old rogue's proposal to cut our tongues and tie our feet—a pretty way to speak, indeed! as if it had been one of his own poor, slavish, ignorant countrywomen."

"Never mind, Stitchwell," said Miss Helen, "you have the advantage of him; he will be a cleverer man than Cussim Ali that will tie your tongue, or restrict it either."

"Considering how things stand," said Miss Amelia to her sister, on their way to the breakfast-room, "it will be impossible for us to show how little we value the new society which Mrs. Cheapstow has brought to us."

"New, indeed!" answered her sister; "I wonder, if General Monkland knew all, what he would think of such company for his daughters! Though, to be sure, if they mean to adopt her, they have a right to take her with them wherever they go—which makes it more provoking. I wonder if Mr. Sinclair, with all his ideas of birth and propriety, knows this."

"He is a Scotchman," answered Miss Amelia, "and, though he is proud, he is poor and politic; he is not the eldest son, you know—not his uncle's heir, and it would be no bad speculation to be Colonel Cheapstow's—perhaps the M'Alpin blood might buy the Indian fortune."

Her sister let go her arm and answered coldly, "I am certain he has more sense of his own merits than to throw them away so basely."

"Men, in our day, never think their merits ill laid out in the purchase of a nabob's fortune, Helen; perhaps, before they came to the island, your ten thousand pounds seemed full value for all."

"He dared not think anything of the kind!" said Miss Helen; but, recollecting herself for a moment, she added, "this supposition about the Cheapstows is all your own;" and she entered the breakfast-room with the intention of making farther observations before she took any definite step.

When did a coquette ever make an observation but through the medium of her own vanity,

or see things most obvious to all other eyes but as she desired that they should be; and, to use again the worn-out simile of the moth round the candle, the inability to flutter longer is almost invariably the only efficacious restraining preventative.

Malcolm Sinclair was a guest in her father's house, and, in a manner, an officer under his command, so that it was hardly possible that General Monkland's daughters should not meet with attention, particularly when their own merits, and all the circumstances of the case, were thrown into the scale. They were lively, and, in the common acceptance of the word, agreeable girls; they knew and constantly practised all the little aids and helps of conversation and society which, to those who had no other means of getting over their time, was invaluable in a place like St. Helena; and it was quite natural that those who were tired of the confinement of a vessel or a garrison should accept with pleasure an invitation to Plantation House, and feel and express themselves thankful for permission to go there without even that ceremony.

Of this number was Malcolm Sinclair: his natural gayety of heart, prepossessing appearance, gentlemanly manners, and the unaffected ease of his domestic habits, soon made him a general favourite with all the members of the governor's family. Mrs. Monkland permitted him to come at all times, and he walked into the drawing-room or into the garden without being announced; the servants had the habit of saying, "It is not a stranger—only Mr. Sinclair," and the family had the habit of expecting him.

It is but justice, however, to him to say, that though he had great pleasure in the society of those who treated him so kindly in a place where he had so few resources, he had never thought of paying particular attention to any of the sisters. He borrowed books for them, and got music copied from the naval and military bands, and danced and made sketches among the rocks, without any other intention than making the term of his exile agreeable to himself and those among whom it was passed.

Such a domestication of a stranger was perhaps not prudent upon the part of Mrs. Monkland; but her husband had always held high military commands in foreign settlements, and was consequently, in a manner, obliged to receive strangers and officers under his command to a greater or less degree of intimacy in his family; and she trusted that her daughters had been too well trained, and knew too well their own advantages, to think of those whose situation or interest did not give them a title to have aspiring notions.

Miss Helen had not bestowed very particular attention upon Malcolm, except as a means of mortifying her servant Mr. Heathcote, until Eleonora's appearance among them; her remarkable beauty made her an object worth disputing with; and from the moment she had heard Eleonora's name mentioned with praise, Malcolm Sinclair suddenly rose in her eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

"Narrow is thy dwelling now! Dark the place of thine abode!

With three steps I compass thy grave, O thou who wast so great before!"—OSIAN.

AFTER breakfast the governor's carriages were

in waiting for the party, and, in consideration of their being old Indians, and unable to stand the sun, Colonel Cheapstow was taken into one, and Dr. M'Alpin into the other. Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow, Miss Monkland and her friend, led the way; the three young ladies following, under the care of the doctor, attended by half a dozen equestrians.

Their first point was Longwood, where they arrived without accident, notwithstanding the precipitous road they had climbed, and the animals upon which some of the party were mounted. The house, which was at the time uninhabited, had a desolate and dreary appearance, standing on the steep slope of a hill, overlooking the sea, unsheltered, in the bright blaze of a vertical sun, which just then broke from the clouds which had covered it all the morning.

The empty apartments were soon inspected, and they passed on to the little summer-house, in the corner of the garden, where he who had experienced the greatest varieties of human life was wont to sit for hours, poring upon a small rivulet of clear water, which ran always the same. A worn opening was pointed out, where he had been in the habit of resting the telescope with which he looked out on the rolling ocean.

Who, in seeing these silent memorials of the manner in which a captive wiled away the hours of hopeless retrospection, at the moment can remember the crimes of overgrown ambition—the absolute indifference to human suffering and human life, which had cast him, like a rootless weed, on a desert shore?

"We are perverse creatures, colonel," said Dr. M'Alpin, "poor, contradictory, perverse creatures. I mind, as if it were yesterday, the pleasure I had in hearing, at Lucknow, that the disturber of the world was quietly landed here, never again to flood Continental Europe with human blood, and I no sooner find myself set in the place in which he sat, and gazing on the little burn on which he gazed, than I am disposed to forget all but his fame—his renown—the splendid monuments he has left; and when I see the spot which his telescope wore by long use—what he suffered—could this little spot give us a record of the bitter thoughts which must have filled his heart here, what a sermon would it be on ambition!"

"Yes, yes, doctor! when a man has started with the misguiding star before his eyes, and his good sword in his right hand, the chance is, he follows the phantom from 'weal to wo.'"

"We should all turn philosophers," joined Mrs. Cheapstow, "if we were to stay here; there is a spirit in the place which gives tongues to stones and running brooks; and, to exemplify it, I will give you my opinion, that he would never have come here if it had not been for his moral delinquency. He turned away his wife, which was the beginning of evil to him. For the sake of securing a throne to his son, he projected the Russian campaign, and all followed in course. Had that marriage never taken place—had that son never been born, *he*, if short-sighted mortals may presume to say what *might have been*, would perhaps never have been here."

"At all events," said the doctor, "this island is his kingdom; there is nothing but his name in the whole place."

"That is true," said the colonel, who had pleasure sometimes in bringing down what he considered his friend's flights, "and a bare, desolate, unproductive domain it is!"

The young people had, under the favour of a cloud which came over the sun, been examining the little garden, which had not much to attract their attention, and Helen Monkland had in vain essayed to have a moment's conversation with Malcolm Sinclair. The party was too large, and the place too small, to admit of her speaking without more hearers than she wanted, so that she was obliged to reserve a communication she was dying to make until some more fitting opportunity.

Our friends were again in motion, and, as the day continued cloudy, the ladies were able to quit their carriages when they reached the little valley which Napoleon had fixed on as the place where he should wish to rest. Three weeping-willows bend their pendent branches over the spot, which is covered with five flat stones, taken from the kitchen floor at Longwood, and guarded from intrusion by an iron railing. A scanty stream of water runs through the little valley, and gives it a more verdant appearance than is found in some other parts of the island.*

"When I stand here," said Dr. M'Alpin, plucking one of the violets which had been planted by Madame Bertrand at the head of the grave, "I will forget that he was an enemy of my country, and only think of the conquering general, whose eagles flew to victory at his command."

"It has sometimes seemed strange to me, doctor," said Colonel Cheapstow, "that, with your spirit, you should have chosen to heal wounds instead of to make them."

"Ay, colonel, the human heart is like the deep sea: a strong current runs on the surface, which is visible to all eyes, but there is often a stronger far below, which runs in a contrary direction, and may account to you for things being found in places where they could not have been looked for. No one is more sensible of the bright side of honour, and fame, and victory, than I am; but I know well, when these dazzling meteors lead on the nations, what is left on the road which has been passed, and I choose to follow them with my feeble help."

"May every one, my dear uncle, who treads the bright path, be sure of such followers," answered Malcolm; "but give me to lead—to lead always, though it should land me here."

"I would follow, and not lead," said Eleonora.

"And I would lead, and not follow," answered Helen Monkland, who doubtless expected that Malcolm would be pleased with an opinion so like his own; but no applause followed.

"Here we are, again under the spell of this man's influence," said Mrs. Cheapstow, "making our confessions, and looking into our own hearts, by the grave of him who considered the human race as but born to aggrandize him; and who knew, and sought to know, nothing of the human heart but to make its weakness his strength."

"While we are here," said Eleonora, "let us not remember what he has done, but what he has suffered."

"Sweet Eleonora," said the doctor, "that is a sentiment worthy of yourself;" and Malcolm's speaking countenance showed that he quite agreed with his uncle's opinion.

"And so, my amiable visionary," said Mrs. Cheapstow, laughing, "my stern realities are to be put out of countenance by your *beau idéal* of

the matter. Well, well, let it be so; there was a time when I could dream dreams and see visions as well as another, though you know, doctor, that time does not, with all the world, last forever."

"And when it is passed," answered the doctor, "what better comes in place of it? A naked show of mean realities, clipped to the smallest dimensions and poorest forms by the unsparring hand of reason. The rolling blast of the Desert sweeps up the sand into a pyramid, which, however high it may be reared, is as easily scattered as it was brought together; and it is often hard for us to believe that, where we have the power to attract, we have not the same power to hold."

Helen Monkland heard nothing but the last sentence, as she was following Malcolm to get a sprig of the willow, which she had bribed a sentry (placed to prevent the trees from being carried away as relics) to permit her to cut. She, as everybody does, applied the remark she heard to what was passing in her own mind.

"I shall soon see," she thought, "if this observation be true."

"Thank you, Mr. Sinclair," she said, taking the willow from his hand; "this will do; it is quite sufficient for my album of plants from celebrated spots. Why do you cut so much?"

"The other ladies," answered Malcolm, "will perhaps like to have a memorial also."

"Oh, no, I assure you my sisters do not care for such things; and Miss Cheapstow, it is not to be supposed, from her education, poor thing! that she can feel interest in anything of the kind."

Malcolm looked surprised, and the speaker proceeded.

"I really pity her, Mr. Sinclair. It must be very distressing for her to be brought into company so much above her."

"Miss Cheapstow can never dread or feel such a mortification," answered Malcolm, with a voice which would have prevented any other person from going farther; but she eagerly broke in,

"Oh! I can assure you that you have been misinformed. She is only a charity-girl, taken from a charity-school at Madras by Mrs. Cheapstow, and has no more right to the name of Cheapstow than I have."

Malcolm was so surprised and provoked, that Miss Helen was disposed to flatter herself, from his momentary silence and rising colour, that she had gained her point.

"Poor thing! that accounts for her not learning to dance, and for her being ignorant of everything that young ladies ought to know. I really quite feel for her."

"There is not the least occasion, Miss Monkland," said Malcolm; "and you will doubtless be happy to hear that Miss Cheapstow, though perhaps she has no legal claim to that name, is a gentlewoman by birth as well as by manners."

"I am extremely happy, indeed, to hear it," answered the young lady, with an air of incredulous scorn; "and more particularly as no one could expect to meet with birth or breeding in a charity-school. But, Mr. Sinclair, since you know so much, you will perhaps be able to tell me how she came there?"

"By the death of her parents. And you may rest assured that the circumstance is authentic, when I tell you that my uncle is my authority."

Miss Helen felt herself overwhelmed with a

* This was written before the removal of Napoleon's remains.

variety of feelings, which, taken either individually or collectively, were altogether contrary to her expectations and wishes. Mr. Sinclair knew, and disregarded the circumstances which she hoped would weigh so much in her favour; in fact, they only created more interest in his eyes, and she had shown herself envious and spiteful to no purpose.

His perfect command of temper did not deceive her when he said, "She would be happy to hear that Eleonora was a gentlewoman," and at that moment she would have been pleased if something which she could have construed into disrespect on his part had permitted her to tell him her mind more freely; but Malcolm, though for a moment exceedingly vexed and provoked with what the generosity of his mind felt to be a mean and cruel subject of triumph, and one upon which he might have spoken differently to any man who had made the same observations, never forgot the respect due even to the folly of his informant. He felt, also, a sort of mortification, that a person of whom he had thought so well could behave so ill, and said in his own mind, "Is this the lively, agreeable, playful Miss Helen Monkland?"

An awkward kind of silence subsisted for a few moments, while both parties were revolving their own thoughts. Miss Helen was the first to observe, "But, though you have told me where you got your information, you have not asked me where I got mine."

"No," he answered, "I am quite satisfied that you are convinced of its inaccuracy."

There was something in this speech, commonplace as it was, which rather soothed the irritated state of the young lady's feelings, and disposed her to conciliate, finding there was nothing else left for her.

"I think it will be as well not to say anything of the matter, since the thing turns out so differently."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Helen," answered Malcolm.

The look of approbation which accompanied his assent in a manner indemnified Helen for the interest he had shown in the matter, and which vanity again began to whisper arose more from the idea that she should think or she should act unworthy of herself, than any interest in another. Malcolm had no intention to deceive; and, though not perfectly indifferent to the good or ill opinion of handsome young ladies, was not at this moment conscious that he had a greater share of it than he deserved.

CHAPTER XVI.

"If knowledge of the world makes men perfidious,
May Juba ever live in ignorance."

ADDISON.

It was late before the party reached Plantation House, and the ladies found themselves so fatigued with the labours of the morning, that they separated to take a little rest before dressing for dinner. Mrs. Cheapstow took that opportunity of spending half an hour with Eleonora, who recounted to her all the little blunders she had fallen into, and the host of questions she had drawn upon herself, and the odd way in which the Miss Monklands had behaved to her during the excursion.

"They asked what relation subsisted between me and Colonel Cheapstow; if Dr. M'Alpin

was a relation of mine; when I had first seen you; who were my companions, and what I had learned."

"It is my fault," answered Mrs. Cheapstow; "I might have foreseen, my dear, that an envious and prying world would take advantage of your inexperience."

"What can any one envy in me?" said Eleonora, "unless, indeed, it is the happiness of having you, and Colonel Cheapstow, and Dr. M'Alpin, and Mr. Sinclair for my friends. All the girls envied my happiness when I left school with you; but it is different with the Miss Monklands, who have their own mamma, and know so many things that I am ignorant of."

"Yes, they certainly know some things that you are fortunately ignorant of, and I ought to have put you on your guard before we came here. However, I do not regret what has passed; you have gained some experience, which, as it has been painful, will be of more use than all I could have said; and, as all this has passed among strangers, with whom we part in a few days, it is of no consequence."

"I never imagined that any one could think the loss of my parents, and my being brought up at an orphan-school, at all droll; but the Miss Monklands did."

"How did they come by that intelligence? Did you tell them?"

"No; they seemed to know everything, and asked a hundred questions which I could not refuse to answer without a falsehood."

"We are in a perverse world, Eleonora, where malignant curiosity is always at work; and in future, my love, when you meet with things new to you, you will restrain the remarks which give it birth."

"I will never make observations to any one but Mr. Sinclair, who is good enough to help my ignorance without laughing at it."

Mrs. Cheapstow looked at Eleonora as she spoke, and saw, from the expression of her countenance, that it was needless to say anything upon this subject; and as they were to leave Sinclair at St. Helena in a few days, no inconvenience, she thought, could result from this friendship.

Eleonora was in want, as she said, of some one to instruct her ignorance in the thousand trifles on which no lesson in advance could avail, and Mr. Sinclair was candid enough to see her character as it really was, and honourable enough not to take advantage of it.

Malcolm Sinclair was Dr. M'Alpin's nephew, a distinction in the eyes of Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow which placed him in their family on a very different footing to that which the length of their acquaintance warranted; and Mrs. Cheapstow contented herself with merely saying, in answer to Eleonora, "Whenever you can ask my advice, my dear, it will be best to come at once to me. You know that no one is so much interested in all that concerns you."

"Dear Mrs. Cheapstow, you have been more than a mother to me, and your advice and opinion is better to me than the whole earth. What was I until I saw you? You have given me a mind that I should never have had but for you, and happiness that I did not know was in the world."

"My poor girl, my dear girl!" said Mrs. Cheapstow, kissing her forehead, "long may it be so. Now dress, and send the ayah to me when you have done."

Mrs. Cheapstow left the room, and her grateful protégée commenced her toilet, utterly unconscious that she possessed in no uncommon degree the loveliness of appearance which would make her an object of envy to thousands. The extraordinary circumstances of her life had precluded the possibility of her meeting with the attentions or compliments which, usually from the cradle, inform the possessors of personal endowment of the advantages they enjoy. The object of a kind of jealousy from her youth upward, the praise or caresses bestowed on beautiful children in general had never been hers. As she grew up, her disinclination to take part in the amusements of her schoolmates, and her love of reading when she could find a book, still kept her at a greater distance. At school she knew she was different from those by whom she was surrounded, but she fancied that difference consisted in her European parentage, and she had actually attained the age of seventeen without knowing that she possessed loveliness of form and feature which falls but to the lot of few.

Helen Monkland, on reaching her room, threw herself upon a couch, and took up a book with the intention of preventing her sister from asking questions which she was not at that moment disposed to answer. Out of humour with herself, with Malcolm, and Eleonora, she hardly knew upon what to fix, and she began to revolve in her own mind all that had passed in the morning.

"To have such a girl as that preferred to me is too provoking—and by Sinclair too, who, until now, I thought a man of such taste and spirit—one who could appreciate accomplishments and elegance of manners—what can he see in that girl? Stupid as he is, I cannot think he is so mean as to be swayed by her expectations—for they may be but expectations after all; a thousand things may occur to disappoint them: the old colonel, before he has time to make a will, may perhaps die of a surfeit; or if his wife goes first, he may take another, and then where are her expectations? The sight of that girl, with her affected modesty, and simplicity, and indifference, is hateful to me! It may impose upon the old doctor, who, I fancy, has never seen half a dozen young ladies in his life, and that accounts for it: it is he who has described her to his nephew as a heroine of romance. As soon as I see him, I shall try to find out how things stand in that quarter."

She continued to consider the subject so long that her sister had finished dressing before she began. The only satisfactory point she could fix upon was, that the Indianman was to sail in a few days, and Sinclair was to remain. "If it were only possible to make him see what the world thinks of such people without my appearing in the matter—for I would not flatter his vanity by letting him think that I am jealous, nor shock his romance by appearing envious—I have it! Fanny Jerrel dines here—she is the very person I want."

Charmed with this arrangement, the young lady sprung up, and set to business industriously, that she might be ready to commence operations. Fortunately, as she was going down stairs, she heard Miss Jerrel's voice in the hall, and taking her for a few moments into the library, on pretence of communicating to her dear friend all that had occurred since their last meeting, she gave her the whole history of Eleonora, and did not forget to add a paragraph regarding the ab-

surdity of the attention which was paid to such a person.

"Astonishing!" answered Miss Fanny, when she had listened to all. "Every one whom I have seen for the last two days has done nothing but talk of this Miss Cheapstow, and her grace and her elegance—I really cannot understand it—but what does Mr. Heathcote, and what does Mr. Sinclair say?"

"Heathcote, I fancy, has never troubled himself with the matter, and Sinclair only sees through his old uncle's spectacles."

"Is it possible that a man of such taste and such refinement—such a judge of dignity and propriety—you recollect how much he wished to prejudice you against me for a harmless joke—should be captivated by a little ignorant girl, who, I dare say, does not know that there are such things in the world?"

"I did not say he was *captivated*," said Helen, laying an accent on the word which betrayed her vexation. "I only said that he was disposed to consider her misfortunes, as his uncle has taught him to call them, very interesting. If he really thought she was a soldier's child, he would see the story in a different light. He is too much of a Scotchman to dispense with birth, though he overlooks breeding."

"I owe him a little reprisal for his opinion of me, and if you will help me, Helen, this night shall not pass before I have paid my debt."

"Whatever you do, Fanny, you know I must not appear in it, for she is a guest in this house, and mamma would be very angry if I were to go beyond the rules of politeness."

"Never fear; the rules of politeness are so elastic, that we may extend them a little for our own purposes, without giving any one cause of complaint."

"All this is very well, Fanny, but mamma has an eye upon me constantly, and if you will amuse yourself, I must absolutely not appear in it."

"I understand all that, Helen, and I mean to give you the amiable character of the defender; you know, my dear, you will gain in everybody's eyes by that."

"Oh! you naughty girl!" answered Helen, laughing and colouring at the same moment. "You have so much invention."

Miss Fanny Jerrel and Miss Helen Monkland entered the drawing-room together; the former was presented by the latter to the innocent object of her intended persecution, and Helen saw, by her friend's retreating and disdainful courtesy, that she was surprised by the sight of beauty much beyond what she had expected.

Mortified by this discovery, because conscious that the graces obvious to a prejudiced person must be real, Helen whispered in the ear of her friend, "You see she is too strong for you; better give over the attempt."

"On the contrary, her calm indifference is only an additional motive. Did you remark how she received my dignified bend, which I intended should overwhelm her? and the cool insolence of Sinclair's bow and his hope, 'that he had the honour to see Miss Jerrel well?' I think he has a foretaste of what we wish for him. His tone had all the studied gravity and solemnity of a Chinese mandarin, repeating by heart a lesson out of the book of ceremonies, and his body bent in the angle to express, 'I have the honour to detest you!'"

"Now you are seeking to justify yourself,

Fanny, for the intentions you are resolved to carry into execution."

"Not at all; and since you disapprove of them, Helen, we will think no more on the subject."

"I should certainly disapprove of your doing a malicious thing, Fanny; but for a little innocent amusement—and you have already told me that is all you mean—why should you give it up?"

"Come, come, Helen, be frank, and if you give me the trouble to humble interlopers and truant swains, give me the credit also. Say the truth: you will be very well pleased if I displace the idol, and show it to be but potter's clay instead of porcelain, so that you do not lose in the eyes of the worshippers?"

"You are a clever girl, Fanny, that I have always told you."

"But at present it would be more to the purpose to tell me that I have hit the right mark; for, mind ye, I will not be brought to try my skill blindfold."

"I did not know you were so vain, Fanny, else I would have told you that you are right—quite right in all you say and do."

"Now, then, Helen, we know the matter in hand, and the why and the wherefore."

At dinner Miss Jerrel managed to seat herself by Dr. M'Alpin, who had handed the eldest Miss Monkland to table, and contrived to make the conversation more amusing to him than the dulness of his right-hand companion would have promised.

Miss Jerrel had lately arrived from England, where she had been sent at an age when the dispositions of the mind were not to be changed, nor her early habits of falsehood, envy, and gossip regulated with the same facility as the ringlets of her hair. She returned, however, at the end of three years, "quite a new person," as her parents said. Perfectly accomplished—perfectly well dressed—perfectly versed in the rules of society, and perfectly ready to make as much mischief among her acquaintance as little Fanny Jerrel had ever done—to whose authority every piece of unfounded intelligence had been traced from the time she had attained her eighth year.

After she had talked on different subjects long enough with Dr. M'Alpin to secure his attention, she commenced her efforts by asking, "How long has that young lady been with Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow?"

"For some months," answered the doctor, turning to address some observation to Miss Monkland.

"And where has she been brought up?" continued Miss Jerrel.

"In India," was the laconic reply.

Miss Jerrel, not easily baffled, returned again to the charge. "And I have heard that she lost her parents at a very early age."

"Yes," answered the doctor; "but perhaps you have not heard that she has found in their place friends who love and respect her, and who will take care that, as far as depends upon them, no inconvenience to her may occur from such a misfortune."

This was said in a dry, determined tone of voice, calculated to repress farther inquiry; it was, however, lost upon the insensibility of the hearer, who, pretending to be ignorant of the relationship which subsisted between Dr. M'Alpin and Mr. Sinclair, answered with the utmost composure, "In such circumstances, she is fortunate

indeed; however, judging from appearances," and she cast a glance across the table where Eleonora and Malcolm were seated, "Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow will soon be relieved from the responsibility of their charitable work; that young man seems much disposed to take it off their hands. Perhaps, indeed, he may suppose, that since they have given her their name, they will give her something more substantial."

"That young man is my nephew, and not disposed to do or say anything contrary to honour or honesty, which is more than can be said of all the world," answered the doctor.

"Your nephew, Dr. M'Alpin! Oh, I beg your pardon! I trust you will never imagine that I had the most distant idea of such a thing."

"Imaginations to trouble my own peace or that of others, Miss Jerrel, do not disturb me; and as there is no harm done, no mischief can come of it," said the doctor, turning again to address his right-hand neighbour.

"Oh, Mr. Sinclair!" said Miss Jerrel, with her usual effrontery, "help me to make my peace with your uncle! Help me out of this scrape!"

"I know no one so able to help herself out of any difficulty as Miss Jerrel," said Sinclair, bowing coldly.

"But you, who are so fond of *charity*, will not surely satisfy your conscience with the petty compliment you have just made me, and refuse your assistance?"

At the word *charity*, upon which Miss Jerrel chose to place a very peculiar emphasis, a little titter was heard among some of the young people; but Malcolm Sinclair, though he well discerned both the intention and application of the phrase, was above the petty malice, and he answered with the same cool reserve as before.

"My assistance, Miss Jerrel, is always at the service of any one who stands in need of it; your superior abilities would only be obscured by my clumsy efforts."

Dr. M'Alpin felt too thorough a contempt for the malice of Miss Jerrel's design to take the least part in anything regarding her, and continued all the time the ladies remained at table to talk with Miss Monkland, whose good-natured indifference rarely saw much of what was going on about her.

Eleonora had regarded all the speakers in turn, and easily perceived that something had discomposed the doctor, without having the most distant idea that she was in any way connected with it. An aid-de-camp, who had handed Miss Jerrel to table, seeing that something had gone wrong with the young lady, which might, perhaps, mar the harmony of the evening, did what he knew would be most agreeable to Mrs. Monkland, and endeavoured to regain her attention by well-timed compliments.

"Something has vexed your uncle, Mr. Sinclair," said Eleonora, after a moment's silence.

A suspicion of the truth crossed Malcolm's mind, or, at least, something like it, and troubled the usual gayety of his manners; though he only answered, "That young lady is not more agreeable to him, I suppose, than she is to me."

"I wish we were away from this place," said Eleonora; "I do not know what there is that vexes us all by turns; and vexation is so new to me now, that I do not take it so humbly as I used to do."

"Nothing short of fiendlike malice could seek to vex you."

"I do not know that any one seeks to do it,"

replied Eleonora, "and yet; sometimes I think they do; and it grieves me to see my friends suffer. There is your uncle and yourself, at this moment, both vexed to the heart. We should be much better on board ship again."

"But you forget, Miss Cheapstow, that I am not to go with you," said Malcolm, "and that your departure will be my grief."

"And is that fixed?" inquired Eleonora, sorrowfully.

"Yes—quite; our ship must remain; but I trust we shall be soon relieved, and then I shall be at liberty."

"And then," said Eleonora, "we shall all be happy at Fernbraes, without any of these people to torment us!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"*Paget*. Malice cannot spy a fault in her, mischief cannot make one; and, if I might offer my advice, it should be, to desist from any further plans in the attempt: 'tis merely loss of labour, take my word for it.

"*Lord D.* To say the truth, I begin to be of your opinion; but, till a better plan can be struck out, we must persist in this: you know my reasons."—*CUMBERLAND'S Mysterious Husband.*

THE ladies rose from table, and in going to the drawing-room, Miss Jerrel laid hold of Eleonora's arm as familiarly as if they had been old acquaintances, and, dragging her towards the piano, said,

"Now, my dear creature, I must hear you play."

"I do not play a note—I never played in my life," answered Eleonora.

"How extraordinary! Then sing, and I will play the accompaniment for you."

"I cannot sing in company—I never sing before strangers."

"That is to say that I am company, for certainly you do not consider the Miss Monklands strangers."

"I never have sung but with friends," replied Eleonora.

"I beg you would not consider us enemies—so begin."

"I beg you will excuse me," said Eleonora, taking the opportunity of release which Miss Jerrel's seating herself at the piano afforded, and she walked to the other end of the room, where Miss Amelia and Miss Helen were turning over a portfolio.

Miss Jerrel no sooner missed Eleonora than the sudden inclination for music took flight, and she followed her to finish catechizing.

"You draw, Miss Cheapstow, I am sure?" she said.

"I wish I could, for I should like it very much."

"Then why do you not?" asked Miss Jerrel.

"Because I never learned."

"Then you are a linguist, I suppose?"

"No, unfortunately. I know little of any language but my native tongue."

"Then you must be a great worker? quite a proficient in fancy-work, I presume."

"You will think me very ignorant if I confess that I hardly know what you call fancy-work," answered Eleonora.

The interrogator laughed triumphantly, and continued,

"My dear creature, where can you have lived, to have been brought up in such a state of na-

ture? Your time must have passed in the garden of Eden, since you have never been harassed with the troubles of accomplishments which fall to the lot of all other women. You have neither been tormented with dancing, playing, singing, drawing, working, or languages; I dare say you have also been exempted from reading and writing. Oh, what an enviable life yours has been! and how free from the toils that we have been forced to undergo!"

"Unfortunately, I have been deprived of many of the advantages which others enjoy, but not exactly to the degree you imagine," answered Eleonora, who now became aware of Miss Jerrel's malicious intentions.

"Deprived?" said Miss Jerrel, seizing upon the word, "then your story must be very interesting; pray do tell it to us—there is nothing I dote upon so much as a romantic story."

"I am sorry I cannot gratify your taste," replied Eleonora. "The loss of both my parents in infancy is a circumstance which can only be interesting to noble minds."

"Why, is not Mr. Sinclair here to hear you?" answered Miss Jerrel; "he would have more reason to be flattered with the observation than I have."

"Yes, it would apply to him," said Eleonora, with some emotion.

Helen Monkland had been a silent hearer of this dialogue, while she continued to turn over the prints; and she had the good sense clearly to perceive that Eleonora's undeviating rectitude of character would give her an advantage in the eyes of Mr. Sinclair which it would not be easy to counterbalance.

"If she were ashamed of her situation, it would be possible to humble her; but she is above pretences." Helen bit her lips when the thought rose in her mind; "but if any one can bring her down, it will be Fanny Jerrel."

Eleonora, vexed with what had passed, and dissatisfied with herself, retired to one of the windows which opened into the garden, and drawing her chair as near the steps as she could, set herself to consider what she had done and said.

"I have suffered myself to behave in a very petulant manner, I fear," she thought; "I am so spoiled by kindness that I seem to consider it as a right, and I forgot that the very want of all those things of which Miss Jerrel spoke leaves me far behind those who have had such advantages; and every one must think so, though they have more good-nature than to make me sensible of it, as this young lady has done."

The thought was so mortifying, that Eleonora continued to meditate upon it until Dr. McAlpin, who had come into the room without her observing him, asked her "what she was thinking about, and what made her so melancholy."

"You will think me so vain if I tell you," answered Eleonora.

He recollected Miss Jerrel's observation, and for a moment thought Eleonora's present abstraction connected with it, but he answered with his usual kindness, "You know, Eleonora, I have never thought you vain, and why should I do so now?"

"Because, until this evening, I never knew how ignorant and unlike the other girls I am."

He looked at her while she was speaking, and saw that something had happened to overturn the usual tranquillity of her mind. "Before I can speak on the subject, you must tell

me, Eleonora, what has led to this discovery," he said.

"Miss Jerrel," answered Eleonora, "has been telling me all the things that I know nothing about, and I was foolish enough to be angry with her."

"If she has been exercising her adder's tongue on you, my poor child," said Dr. M'Alpin, "I do not wonder that you were vexed; but do not forget that, though you know nothing of the trifles which she calls accomplishments, you are not ignorant of truth, and honour, and maidenly modesty like her, and the possession of any one of the three would do her more good than all the odds and ends of vain education which have turned her silly head; and never forget, Eleonora, that you have friends who value you for your own good qualities, for the dispositions of your heart, and not for the world's wealth or frothy acquisitions."

"I hope you will not think I am ungrateful," replied Eleonora. "Surely, blessed as I am, I have more reason to be contented and happy than any other person in the world! though I cannot help wishing that I were more worthy of such kindness."

"Make yourself easy on that head," said the doctor, "and never think that you would better yourself by resembling the senseless, useless, vain creatures, who envy what they can never attain."

Sinclair had been, during this time, at another window, talking with Miss Amelia Monkland, while they took their coffee; and when she was called by her mother to make some arrangement about the card-tables, he strolled about into the garden, and turned into the path which led to the summer-house.

Miss Jerrel, who had been watching her opportunity, proposed to Helen and Mr. Heathcote a little walk into the moonlight. Mr. Heathcote giving an arm to each of the ladies, they followed the same path Sinclair had taken. He had almost reached the summer-house, and, seeing them advance, turned in with the intention of avoiding them, as he fancied himself unperceived in the shadow of the trees.

The movement, however, did not escape the lynx eyes of his persecutrix, who, when she was near enough to be certain that she must be overheard, proposed to Helen that they should sit for a few moments upon the little bench by the door, rather than enter a place which was altogether dark, knowing perfectly well that there was no egress but by that door, and that Sinclair must remain where he was, or join them, which she was confident he did not wish to do. "Now, Helen," she said, "do tell me who this Miss Cheapstow is, whom I find so much domesticated among you in the few days that I have been absent?"

"The friend and *protégée* of Mrs. Cheapstow, as you see, Fanny."

"That is not what I want—her history, I mean."

"I did not know she had any history," answered Helen.

"Nor I neither," joined Mr. Heathcote.

"If that is the case, I find I am better informed than either of you. Guess, Mr. Heathcote, where she has been brought up?"

"It is more than I am equal to—in retirement, I suppose."

"Yes, truly," said Miss Jerrel, "in the retirement of a charity-school."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Heathcote; "she is quite a lady!"

"You have been misinformed, perhaps," observed Helen.

"Not in the least; and the thing is not only possible, but true—though I myself was unwilling to credit it until I had spoken with her, and found that she has not the education of a chambermaid."

"You are too severe, Fanny, too unjust," said Helen; "there are many degrees between an ordinary education and your accomplishments."

"Hers is by no means ordinary; on the contrary, it is *tout-à-fait* extraordinary: think of a common soldier's daughter, brought up in the Orphan School, with the intention of earning her daily bread, or of marrying some man in her own sphere in life, suddenly transplanted by the sentimental caprice of an old lady and two old gentlemen into society so much above her—is not that altogether out of the common way?"

Mr. Heathcote burst into a long, loud, silly laugh, and Helen added, "But her being brought up in this way is her misfortune, not her fault; and I know, from good authority, that she is well born."

"And yet," exclaimed Miss Jerrel, "you did not know that she had any history! Oh! Helen! Helen! your generosity betrays itself!"

"Miss Helen Monkland is so much above the rest of the world," said Mr. Heathcote, gallantly, "that I am not surprised that she feels for this poor girl, whose situation must be very distressing, finding herself, as you say, Miss Jerrel, in society so much above her."

And Mr. Heathcote drew himself up and adjusted his cravat as he spoke.

"And there is nothing finer, I have been told," continued Fanny, "than to see Mrs. Cheapstow give her lessons, and show her how she is to do, and tell her what she is to say, and recommend her to keep up her character for simplicity as the only one she is likely to succeed in, and the one most likely to make the old doctor consent to her marrying his nephew. Oh! the whole thing is charmingly got up betwixt them! and your friend, Mr. Sinclair, with all his pride, and pretension, and pedigree, will end in being duped by a foundling."

"No one can be sorry for such a self-sufficient, supercilious *Scotchman*," answered Mr. Heathcote, laying the accent upon his country, which showed that he intended it to be the climax of Sinclair's unworthiness.

"You are wrong, I think, Fanny, quite wrong in this information," said Helen. "I candidly think Miss Cheapstow is what she seems to be."

"Not in the least, I give you my word; you judge the rest of the world by yourself, which is taking too high a standing for common use. I have often told you, Helen, that you see things as you would wish them to be, not as they are."

"I should be more indebted to you for your good opinion than I can express," said Helen, "if it were not given to me at the expense of another."

"You should value it, Helen," replied Miss Jerrel, "for it is not at the service of every one. I am not one of those who seek popularity by finding all the world faultless."

"You have given us this night a proof of your discernment," said Mr. Heathcote, as they rose to return to the house, "and I quite agree with you."

Miss Jerrel flattered herself that she had set.

things in a new light in the eyes of Mr. Sinclair, whom she conjectured was within hearing of every word that had been said; but what was her surprise, on re-entering the drawing-room, to find him seated by Eleonora, talking so quietly that she was puzzled to think how it could be. "Had he not heard her? and if he had, how did he make his escape unobserved, and how did he retain such self-composure? He must be a skilful manœuvrer, and possessed of more self-command than I gave him credit for," she thought.

Helen Monkland was also curious to observe what effect her generosity had produced upon Malcolm; but during the whole evening she could not perceive any difference in his manners towards her. He was as attentive, as polite as usual, but nothing more, though Miss Jerrel tried to persuade her that there was a marked difference in his manners, and that his attentions to Eleonora were only to pique her for the home-thrusts she had given him.

"I think we have done wrong, Fanny," said Helen; "I fear he sees through the whole matter, or that girl has really the art which you attributed to her."

The fact was, that Malcolm, as soon as he heard the commencement of this well-concerted conversation, conjectured the drift of the speakers, and foresaw how it was likely to turn; he therefore wisely resolved to keep his temper, and disappoint their malice by jumping from a window on the other side of the summer-house, which he effected without noise, and had been quietly seated in the drawing-room talking to Miss Cheapstow, while they thought he was forced to swallow all they had prepared for him.

Both the young ladies were, with Miss Amelia, called upon to sing a glee, which relieved Eleonora from the sort of censorship which she could not help feeling herself to be under. "I shall be so happy when this visit is finished," she said, "and we are quietly again at James Town; here I feel constrained and uncomfortable, I hardly know for what."

"I shall be glad, also, when the visit is ended," answered Malcolm. "I have seen several things in so different a light to what they appeared to me before, that I dread to think of the time I have to remain here. What am I to do when you are gone?"

"I shall lose most," answered Eleonora, with the utmost simplicity. "You have friends wherever you go; every one seems to have pleasure in your society, and every one seems to be displeased with me, and to have satisfaction in setting all my deficiencies in array against me. The cause of my own unfitness for the world I have so earnestly wished to be in, quite overcomes me."

"Do not, my dear Miss Cheapstow," he replied, "let the envious malice of little minds affect your happiness; your undeniable superiority is the sole cause of the persecution you have met with."

"You are very good, Mr. Sinclair, to try to reconcile me to myself; but I feel my own ignorance so deeply, that I almost wish that we were again on board ship, that I might try, with Mrs. Cheapstow's advice, to overcome it."

"And if you almost wish to be on board again, Miss Cheapstow, why do you not altogether wish it?" inquired Malcolm, in a tone of pique.

"Because you will not be with us," replied Eleonora, with the same tranquillity.

"Pardon me, Miss Cheapstow," he said, "pardon my selfish vanity, that could for a moment doubt of the generosity of your mind."

"I do not know what I have to pardon in you," said Eleonora; "you have always been my friend and assistant in the disagreeable things my ignorance has led me into, and I hope always will be."

"I trust so, with my whole heart," answered Malcolm; "and, believe me, I shall be more proud of the title than of any other that ever can be bestowed upon me."

Malcolm Sinclair was, as he said, proud of being considered the friend of Eleonora; he felt that the choice was honourable to his character; for, though devoid of experience, she possessed the delicacy and instinctive feeling of character which enabled her to appreciate qualities which were in a manner new to her. Malcolm felt he owed the confidence reposed in him to the integrity of his conduct, and the thought was as gratifying to his self-love as interesting to his better feelings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A fairer isle than Britain never sun
Viewed in his wide career! A lovely spot
For all that life can ask! salubrious! mild!
Its hills are green, its woods and prospects fair,
Its meadows fertile, and, to crown the whole,
In one delightful word, it is our home—
Our native isle!"

COTTLE.

"Oh, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world,
That has such people in't!"

SHAKESPEARE.

NEXT morning all our friends took leave of the governor and his family, and returned to their boarding-house in James Town just in time to see Blue Peter flying, and, as soon as they came in sight of the harbour, to receive the captain's summons to repair on board.

In our world all enjoyment is followed by parting, and the good doctor had become so much attached to his nephew, that he could not suffer the necessity without regret. It seemed to him as if he had recovered the society of his sister in her son; perhaps, had she lived to greet his return, he would have found a change in the companion of his youth; but Malcolm brought her before him as he had left her, in the warmth, and generosity, and unbroken elasticity of youthful feeling; he looked upon him, and he saw his mother's smile; he listened to him, and he thought he heard her voice; his sentiments seemed to flow from her heart; her kind and generous spirit dictated the words he uttered, and his uncle listened to him with "more pleasure than," as he often declared, "he ever expected to feel again on this side of time."

Though those whose advanced pilgrimage in life's rough ways must know the vanity of the high hope and buoyant expectations of early years, still they carry the freshness, the charm, and the promise of the opening spring along with them, and the heart not closed by misanthropy is sometimes willing to forget its own bitter experience, and to hope for the objects of its love after its own hopes are withered. When Malcolm spoke of Fernbraes and the happiness

he anticipated in returning there, his uncle permitted his mind to go back to the first years he had spent in India, and the feelings he then experienced at a similar prospect, and he said, "Yes, my dear boy, I trust I shall have the comfort of having you there with me, and that you will enjoy all the happiness I have spent my life in dreaming of."

Our own cutting experience may very clearly prove that the scourge and the knife are the best disciplinarians of the rebellious human heart; yet such is the instability of human reason, that we still hope that others may attain wisdom by a smoother path; and though we know the rough, bare, up-hill road, exposed to sharp and chilling blasts, to be that which shows the world as it truly is, we still sigh for the sheltered valley, though our bounded visions see little beyond it.

Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow gave Mr. Sinclair a very cordial invitation to make their house his home when he returned to England: an invitation which he told them he sincerely hoped to be able to accept, though his doing so must depend upon the destination of his ship.

Eleonora expressed the sorrow she felt at parting from one who had treated her with uniform kindness; had she known the interpretation her regret might have borne, she would certainly have suppressed the expression; but she knew nothing of sentimental feelings; she had never read a novel, and she had never associated or conversed with those who were better informed upon such subjects than herself. From the moment she saw the doctor's nephew, she had been quite certain that he must be good and amiable like his uncle, though she thought it was impossible that one so very much admired, and so capable of pleasing every one he conversed with, could have the same indulgence for her; her ignorance appeared greater in her own eyes than it had ever done before, when she compared his manners, and instruction, and acquirements with her own; and her gratitude to Malcolm was proportionably great when she found that, instead of exposing her as others took pleasure in doing, he gave her assistance and direction with as much kindness and steadiness as his uncle could have done; and, as he was more constantly near her, she had become accustomed to consult him when she wanted advice.

Brought up as she had been, it was impossible that she could guess what the world would say of such friendship; ignorant of the usages of society, and having no guide but her own feelings, she was not conscious of any reason for disguising the regret which she really and naturally felt; though, after they had fairly left St. Helena, and seen its rocky mountains fade in the distance, she spoke no more on the subject, but set herself with double application to acquire the different branches of education, and follow the studies Mrs. Cheapstow judged proper for her; and in the seven weeks spent at sea before the Ruthven Castle reached England, Eleonora laboured with unceasing industry, not to acquire accomplishments which were at present out of her reach, but to store her mind with useful knowledge, and accustom herself to reflect on what she read. It would have been difficult, in many cases, to make up for the time which had been lost; but when Nature

has given the capability, and there is inclination to profit by it, no time is too late to learn—as the doctor often told Mrs. Cheapstow, Nature goes twice as far as education, and rarely does anything by halves.

They were running along under easy sail, with a favourable breeze, when "Land" was announced from the maintop. "It is Old England!" said Colonel Cheapstow, when the welcome cry reached his ears. "Come, my dear, come Eleonora, let us go on deck, and see a sight dear to British eyes. There, Eleonora, there is the country of your fathers," he said, pointing to the long, low, dark blue line which streaked the horizon.

"Ay," said the doctor, mounting the poop stairs, while his friends were talking with the captain, and looking through his telescope as if they would anticipate the vessel's motion, "how well I remember the day I lost sight of that shore, thirty years ago!"

He leaned over the railing, and covered his face with his hands as he retraced in his own mind the changes which those years had brought about. "There is England," he thought; "and I am returned to it in health, and with a moderate portion of strength, and with riches beyond what my most sanguine wishes ever anticipated; but what do I expect from it all? Where are my hopes? blighted, withered, and dead: who will rejoice on my arrival but from interested motives? Who is there to recognise my altered form, or to welcome an exile after his wanderings? And yet this is the hour I have so ardently longed for!"

The good doctor felt the ingratitude of such thoughts just at that time, and strove to banish them from his mind; he stayed on deck, musing over bitter fancies, until the dusky outline was lost in the closing evening, and a chill, damp shore-wind drove him to his cabin.

In the night a pilot came on board, bringing with him a pile of English newspapers and the early fruits of the season. "These strawberries," said Colonel Cheapstow, as he helped himself to some at breakfast, "are nothing to what I remember them; the strawberries of my time were quite different."

"I fear the difference is in us, Cheapstow," returned his wife; "the flavour is just what it used to be, though our perception of it is different."

"It is mortifying to think," said the doctor, "how much we are the creatures of habit; and that, after a long absence from our native land, we should return and find our early delights powerless to please. We let ourselves forget that we left them when all things had that power—when the world wore an enchantment it can never wear again."

"I am charmed with the strawberries," said Eleonora; "they are cool, and fresh, and fragrant, and I like them just because they come from the country I have so earnestly wished to see: they seem to me like a surety that I shall be there."

"Yes, Eleonora, you are right," said the doctor; "youth is the season we should return, if we would really relish the pleasures which haunt us in memory through all the years of our exile. It is not when we see too much, and know too much, and feel too much, that we

can take up the dreams which our departure broke off, or return to the unvitiated, uncorrupted tastes of early life. Oh! but it's a severe disappointment for a man to find himself at variance with his memory—to have the things before his eyes which he has all his life fancied would be a delight, and to find that they are so no more, and that, after having looked at and examined them on every side, he is forced to the hopeless confession that they are the same, and the change is in him."

Those who never leave their own country, who spend their lives in the midst of objects and feelings familiar to them from childhood, can no more imagine the sensations which overpower a returned wanderer, than the man who has married the woman of his choice in the flower of her youth, and has seen her grow old by his side, can enter into the sorrowful surprise of him who, after long absence, finds the blooming beauty, whose appearance at seventeen had filled his memory, metamorphosed into the wrinkled grandmother.

Off the Isle of Wight another pilot came on board to take the passengers into Portsmouth; and, well aware of the impatience of those he had to do with to set foot on their native land again, he did not lose such a good opportunity of making them pay for the pleasure, and securing to himself some of the rupees of which it is the joint effort of every one at Portsmouth to lighten passengers.

Of all the cold, chilling bath shocks which a man can receive, none are more vexatious than the ruthless piracy with which he is treated on his return to his own free land. Every one seems to consider him as a pigeon to be plucked, or a contraband article to be squeezed and examined before he is suffered to pass; one who ought to be subjected to the observation of professional spies, the insolence of custom-house officers, and the impositions of pilots, watermen, and *maitre d'hôtels*.

The little vessel in which our friends landed danced like a cork in the swell, and was so low in the water that the waves broke over her and compelled the passengers to remain under hatches, notwithstanding the stifling closeness and heat. They were accompanied by the custom-house officers, who minutely inspected every individual before they were permitted to set foot on English ground, and who sent the single trunk which every passenger was permitted to take from the ship for present use to undergo an overhaul at the Portsmouth custom-house. Mrs. Cheapstow was greatly provoked when, after this inspection, an officer made his appearance with a written paper in his hand, containing a list of muslin dresses which had been taken out of Eleonora's portmanteau, and which they thought proper to arrest upon the plea of "their being too fine for the wear of a private individual, and only fit for a duchess!"

"By this means, you will arrive in London, my dear," said Mrs. Cheapstow, looking over the list, "without a single thing to put on."

"What!" said Colonel Cheapstow, "what do you say, my dear! It is not possible that they can have dared to stop any part of our baggage! If I had these fellows at Lucknow, I would teach them how to behave! Low Europeans presuming to judge what is proper for the

wear of a member of Colonel Cheapstow's family! And am I to meet with such treatment before I have well set foot on English ground! Unparalleled insolence! The first thing I shall do on my arrival in London will be to represent it to the proper authorities, and have redress. Do you know whose baggage you have arrested?" demanded the colonel, turning to the custom-house officer.

"That's no business of ours, sir," returned the man, in a sulky tone; "we do our duty."

"He is right, my dear," said Mrs. Cheapstow, taking her husband's arm with the intention of stopping an altercation which could only have a disagreeable effect; "I am half dead with that horrid boat. Think no more of this business now; in town you will have a better chance of bringing them to reason."

Vexed with the custom-house and fatigued with the pilot-boat, Mrs. Cheapstow chose to rest all day at a Portsmouth hotel, if, indeed, any rest could be found in such a boisterous situation.

"What can we have for dinner?" demanded the colonel. "What have you got in the house?"

"Everything, sir," was the ready answer.

"Game?"

"No, sir; this is not the season, sir."

"Fresh salmon?"

"It has gone out also, sir."

"Cod and oysters, then?"

"We had a beautiful head and shoulders yesterday, but, unfortunately, it was dressed for the corporation dinner; and for oysters, sir, I don't think, sir, there are any."

"Then what *have* you got? what can you give us?" demanded the colonel.

"A fine duck, sir, beefsteak, or a tender mutton-chop, sir; roast-pork, calf's head, or—"

"Fit food for a man-of-war's man who has been fed for a whole voyage on salt provisions!" said the colonel, interrupting the unsatisfactory list. "Have you nothing more suitable for us? At least give us some roast-beef and a turkey, or anything that we have not had every day for the last six months, and vegetables—every variety of vegetables you can procure."

While the colonel was settling the dinner, Eleonora was examining the house—carpeted rooms—beds and windows covered with drapery met her eyes for the first time—in short, the whole place, and the whole manner of it, was unlike anything she had ever seen before, and she earnestly wished that Mr. Sinclair had been there to show her the town, as none of her senior friends seemed much disposed to walk after their tossing in the pilot-boat; but as this was not the case, she could only look from the windows, and wonder what every one could have to do in such a hurry—all those she had ever seen in India had always time enough for whatever was to be done.

Colonel Cheapstow was shocked and amazed by busy feet trotting up and down stairs, and trudging as unceremoniously over his head as if he had not been there to hear them. Cussim Ali was harassed by the impertinent observation of those in the kitchen; his master was low-spirited at the sight of so many human faces, none of which wore a smile for him, or welcomed his return; and the whole party were equally

glad when next morning brought their post-chaises to the door, and they found themselves again in motion, not riding over Neptune's unstable domain, but bowling along a good hard turnpike-road. Those only who have been for months tossed upon every vagrant wave which chooses to lift its head under them, can tell the pleasure of finding themselves on the firm and solid earth, and hearing the lark sing instead of the seabirds shrieking to the gale.

Our travellers looked with delight upon every sweet cottage and small farm on the road. Those who have been out of England know that magnificent houses and stately castles are to be met with in other parts; but the beauty, the neatness, the extreme propriety and comfort of rural and humble life are peculiar to merry England. The rich live at ease all the world over, but the habitations of the lowly are alone beautiful in England.

"What lovely retreats!" said Eleonora, who had never before seen anything of the kind. "Surely the people who live here must be perfectly happy. I could not have imagined such luxuriance and such order. This is different to Choultry Plain or the rocks of St. Helena; and the people who walk about are so alert and so healthy, and so ruddy—oh, it is a new world!"

"A new world indeed, my dear," answered Colonel Cheapstow; "and one I hope you will find better than the old, though they have not given you a favourable specimen in not leaving you a gown to put on."

"That does not signify," joined Mrs. Cheapstow; "in London money does everything in five minutes: we are not obliged to have durzees and cut cloth. You have only to speak the word, and, in native phrase, 'your order is executed.'"

Dr. M'Alpin had no other companion than Cussim Ali, who, upon entering the postchaise, where his master chose he should be, rather than be exposed on the outside, wanted to squat himself in the bottom at his sahib's feet, a situation the doctor would by no means admit of. Cussim next essayed to stand, for the idea of seating himself by his master was a liberty which never entered into his mind as practicable; and when the doctor at length made him understand that it was actually to be done, he gathered himself up in a corner into as small a compass as possible, and drew his feet in under him out of sight, resolved, at least, not to be guilty of the indecorum of leaving such unpolite extremities in view.

The doctor mused on the fair scene before him, and found with pleasure that it even exceeded his recollections—or perhaps it would be more just to say that, having seen more of the globe which we call ours, he was better able to appreciate what his eyes now looked upon.

"This is a country worth returning to," he said, speaking aloud, according to his custom when his mind was full.

"Sahib!" answered his attendant.

"Look out of that window, Cussim," he said, "and tell me if you do not think this a good land—a very good land!"

"It is a good country," answered his attendant, gravely, thrusting out his head as he spoke, in obedience to his master's orders. "It is a very good country for white gentlemen, sahib,

but for black *Admiss* (children of Adam) Hindostan is better. I do not see the Ganges, and I do not see the rice-fields."

"It is natural, Cussim, very natural," said the doctor, speaking kindly to the poor native, who seemed to be painfully impressed with the novelty of everything he saw about him, as he felt that he was never again to be warmed by the rays of his own bright sun; "but never fear, Cussim; though you do not see the Ganges and the rice-fields, you will have plenty of water, and rice too, where you are going, and you will always be with me."

"The sahib's pleasure be done," answered Cussim, respectfully, at the same time drawing himself back into his corner, like a snail in his shell, when he found that his turbaned head was an object of wonder to every one who passed on the road. His Asiatic gravity was greatly shocked by such an unseemly display of curiosity in men; and he conceived but a mean opinion of those who were so ignorant of the common forms of civility as to indulge it, and were weak enough to take part in the disreputable and low-caste amusement of laughing on a public road, fit only for monkeys or women.

Colonel Cheapstow had not been two days in London before he discovered that, instead of living above the world as he used to do, at a distance from its bustle, and turmoil, and vulgar occupation, he was let down to actual contact with its gross materials. To mix in the streets with people who never thought of giving way, and to be disturbed by noises which no orders could silence, to be brushed by in walking, or pressed upon in crowded rooms, were acts of familiarity which made him almost wish that he had retained his own space and place at Lucknow.

"How persons," he said to his wife, "can go to the opera or the theatre, my dear, who have not guards to protect them, is more than I can understand; I really cannot endure to see you elbowing in a crowd—indeed, I can hardly bear it myself. Low-caste Europeans have no idea of what is due to their superiors; people at home are so accustomed to be inconvenienced, that they seem to have no feeling upon the subject. I could not have imagined so many annoyances. Small, stifling rooms, stuffed to an excess, without a breath of fresh air in circulation, heated by gas and seacoal; kitchens in the house, and the smell of cooking; single chairs at dinner, and your next neighbour so close that the servants stretch over your shoulders, and oblige you to take the trouble of asking for what you want instead of anticipating your wishes. Give me the watchful attendance of Mussulman servants, who supply my wants in silence, and who know that they should neither be seen nor heard, though, like invisible spirits, they are always at hand to minister to the comfort of their masters."

"You will get reconciled to all these things, Cheapstow, as other people do."

"Never, never; I do assure you, every repetition only makes the thing more offensive. Is one who has filled a conspicuous station to mix *pele-mele* with the multitude, to be jostled by every little ignorant citizen, whose longest voyage has been across the Channel, and whose greatest command the presidency of a reading-

room! I shall sooner leave London, and never set foot in it again. It was but yesterday, in getting out of my carriage, that a chimney-sweeper almost threw me down at the very door of our hotel here."

"But, as that is not an every-day's occurrence," answered Mrs. Cheapstow, "we must just overlook it, and bring Eleonora into the world a little before we fix upon our future residence. Here are volumes of answers to the budget of notes you sent out; it would appear that all our friends have not left town yet, and there are invitations for the next month."

"I detest the trouble of going to other people's houses, where one is sure to be uncomfortable, and where one is sure to have dessert in the room one has dined in, though it is filled with the fumes of dinner. I should like, my dear, keeping to my old habit of receiving my friends in mine."

"Impossible, Cheapstow! the thing is not to be expected in London; you must get over those *qui-hic* habits, and live like other people."

"I shall never live like other people—at least not like any I see here; and when M'Alpin leaves us, as he says he intends to do to-morrow, I do not see what is to keep us in town."

CHAPTER XIX.

"We twa has run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine,
But we've wander'd many a weary foot,
Sin' auld lang-syne." BURNS.

DR. M'ALPIN, impatient to be under his own roof-tree, only stayed in the great capital to pass his baggage through the India House, and set forth with Cussim Ali for Fernbraes, where he arrived, without accident or interruption, one chilly day in the beginning of June.

Before ushering him into his paternal mansion, it may be as well to account for some of the changes he met with there, and which, as he was ignorant of the circumstances which led to them, he was not prepared to expect.

His sister, soon after his departure from home, had been persuaded to marry a man every way unworthy of her; one whose only recommendation was the possession of the small estate of Stoneyards, four miles from Fernbraes. This, however, was sufficient to determine her parents on the match: their only son had left them, and they were resolved that their daughter should remain; fixing her at Stoneyards was the most effectual means, and there accordingly she was fixed.

After the death of her grandfather, who survived her father and mother, her husband, Mr. Sinclair, took the management of Fernbraes for her absent brother, and took upon himself to make many alterations, which he insisted were improvements, in conformity, as he said, to Dr. M'Alpin's letters on the subject. It was in vain that she remonstrated against his cutting down a bank of large old wood, which extended on the east side of the house between it and the sea. Three straggling, scathed Scotch firs were all that she could rescue from the axe; he insisted that the trees were rotten at the heart, and that it would be much better to remove

them, and plant young in their place, which had a chance to be well enough grown before the laird came home, though she soon ascertained that the old Scotch firs were the only trees among the number decayed at heart, and that the rest were sold to a wood-merchant for a pretty considerable sum.

The house, a large, high, irregular mass of gray granite, with a single tower at one end standing sentry over the rest, was situated upon the north slope of a steep hill, overlooking the sea, which formed a bay of some extent, and wherein the tide was at this moment leaving a stony beach interspersed with pools of water. Upon the face of the mountain, built by Stoneyards for the convenience of his own sheep, which he sometimes chose to pasture there, were several low, white stone dikes, conspicuous in all the newness of their erection; neither shrub or tree had the courage to show itself above them, and encounter such sharp, keen breezes as were there in circulation.

A broad belt of thick, dark Norway pines circled the upper part of the hill upon which the house was placed, and gave to view the mountain's gray stony top, towering up in unclothed nakedness. This wood, with the exception of the before-mentioned old Scotch firs, and a few straggling stunted young trees, which had been stuck in to replace their ancient predecessors, and to shelter, if such a thing were possible, a nondescript summer-house planted on the shoulder of the hill, and constructed on the model of one of the small Mussulman temples so common in India, but which wanted, alas! the spreading banian which ought to have sheltered it, was all the wood which graced Fernbraes.

When Dr. M'Alpin's carriage turned from the south road, round the shoulder of Ben Morvan, the driver of his posthorses took off his hat and welcomed his honour home to Fernbraes, at the same time stopping for a moment, that the laird might have an opportunity of contemplating the inheritance to which he was returned.

The doctor could hardly believe his eyes when he looked on the place he had used to think a paradise. "Where are the trees?" he said, in his old way, speaking aloud.

"Sahib!" answered Cussim Ali, but his master heeded him not.

"Where is the grove in which I used to sit with my dear sister! Where is the great old tree under which she used to feed the thrushes in the spring evenings! My grandfather, I know, never would have cut down that, and wo betide him that has done the ill deed! And this is the house I used to think a palace!—not but that it is big enough for me, and all the friends I have now to put into it."

The doctor sunk back in melancholy abstraction, and the horses moved on. The first human creature whom he could recognise was his worthy foster-brother Duncan Maclean, who was on the watch to meet him. The doctor sprung out of the carriage, and Duncan took his offered hand with right good-will, though there was as much of sorrow as of joy in his looks, to see the changes which years had made upon one he always had called "his young master."

They both stood looking at each other's faces, trying to recall the days which were gone; but it was only in the clear blue eye, which sparkled

with honest joy at his friend's return, that Dr. M'Alpin could yet trace the hearty, active, merry lad he left, in spite of the sedate brow, furrowed cheeks and white locks which he saw before him; and perhaps it was still more difficult for honest Duncan, when he surveyed the laird's altered frame, to identify it with the blithe swanky he remembered, upon whose brow a mother's parting could hardly leave a shade.

"If your mother and the Lady Stoneyards were but here to see this day!" said Duncan, when he felt that the changes in his master's appearance had not extended to his heart. "If they could but look up and see you cross your own threshold!"

"They will look down, Duncan," said the doctor, "they will look down and see it, I have no doubt."

"It's the proudest day that has shone on Fernbraes since those that spelt the name of M'Alpin left it," said Duncan; "and it is more joy to me to see you here, the rightful heir, and my foster-brother—my own old mother's child, than if the best lordship in broad Scotland had been made mine, and everything that belongs to it."

"You will find, Duncan," said the doctor, sensibly affected by the voice of genuine affection, "that I have not forgotten my father's hearthstone, nor them that used to be round it; though, wo's me! who is there now but yourself and my good old nurse, your kind and excellent mother?"

"My mother is not in this part of the country now," answered Duncan.

"Not in this part of the country? not in my house when I have come home to it? How is that?"

"If your honour please," said Duncan, "we will speak aenat that another time; the friends will be waiting for your coming."

As the doctor drew near the house, he observed that some recent attempts had been made to plant shrubberies round it, but that, nipped by the ungenial atmosphere, the common plants had withered away, and dry twigs stuck into the ground only remained to mark the ineffectual effort. The more hardy, such as larches and spruce firs, had hardly attained the height of common currant-bushes. The gravel which covered the walks was mixed with shells, and bordered by seapinks, the only flowers which appeared in bloom.

It is easy to imagine to what a train of thoughts all this gave birth in the doctor's mind, and how much he was pleased when, in the midst of them, he stopped at his own house, to see a dozen strange heads thrust out of the window, gazing with wonder upon him and his satellite Cussim Ali, getting out of the carriage as if he had been "some far awa beast," as Duncan afterward expressed it.

As soon as the door was opened by a white-haired lad, in a full new suit of M'Alpin livery, out flew a pack of dogs of all sorts and sizes, barking and jumping, first on the servant and then into the carriage, to the utter amazement of poor Cussim Ali, and down came Miss Jamesina, in her best bib and tucker, saying, "Uncle, ye are welcome back to auld Caledonia!"

The first sound of her voice, and the first glance of her square figure and broad face, damp-

ed the eagerness with which her uncle would have otherwise greeted the child of his sister; she had no resemblance to Malcolm or his mother—still she was her daughter, and, as such, he received her cordially. All the rest came crowding round them, and Miss Jamesina presented the whole race of nephews, and nieces, and cousins (of whose name even her uncle was ignorant); and also her father, who shook his arm as if he would have shaken it out of its socket, and, while he retained his fingers in his iron grasp, roared in a stentorian voice, "Laird, ye are welcome home again—and a bin house and a bonny ye are come to: I'm no thinking ye has seen mony like it in the Indies."

The doctor's ears were stunned, and his fingers thrilled under the powerful pressure laid upon them; but he strove to master what at the moment he was disposed to think his own nervous irritability, and received his new relations with a good grace, though two minutes were sufficient to convince him that his absent favourite, Malcolm, was the only friend he could find among them.

The glance of an eye or the tone of a voice often displeased him more than the things said or done; they indicated the fountain from which the others flowed, and the careful, calculating, hypocritical sound of Miss Jamesina's voice repeating her well-set compliments of welcome, was hateful to his ears from the first moment it reached them, and almost more odious than the ignorant, boisterous selfishness of her father.

The eldest son, or "the young laird," as he was called, possessed the distinguishing characteristics of hundreds of his cast, in that and every other country. He was, as far as any human creature can be so, without mind, well-looking, and was certainly a well-grown, idle, obstinate, useless man, who considered his father as his steward, and his sisters as servants born to consider his interests, bear his complaints, and humour his caprices.

The second daughter, Mrs. M'Askel, seemed one whose instinct went no farther than personal comfort and self-interest, and when neither of these were in question, had nothing either to do or to say.

The youngest son, Hector, was bred a writer, with the intention of qualifying him to act as factor for his friends, and sheriff-clerk for the county; in him were concentrated the distinctive abominations of the whole family—his father's vulgarity—Jamesina's worldly wisdom—Mrs. M'Askel's ignorance—Hugh's obstinacy—Barbara's vanity—and not one of the good qualities of Malcolm. He had been sent to college to learn assurance and conceit, and returned well qualified to make his way by alternate bowing and pushing.

Cousins and other more distant relations composed the group, whom Miss Jamesina successively introduced to her uncle, and when this necessary ceremony was over, Dr. M'Alpin said, addressing his brother-in-law, "I left your son Malcolm well at St. Helena; I wish I could have brought him here with me to take part in this meeting, and to help me to receive my friends in the home of his forefathers."

"You will not miss him," answered Stoneyards, "when his eldest brother is with you. Hugh, come here, and take the place your birth-

right gives you. He is so bashful, Fernbraes !” continued his father, laying his large hand on the broad shoulders of the tall, stout, awkward young man. “This is our young laird.”

The promising scion attempted an uncouth bow ; his uncle, at the moment, felt the drift of his father, to have him, in a manner, formally recognised as the heir-apparent of Fernbraes, which he determined at once to counteract.

“Say yours, if you please,” he answered, laughing ; “for me, I am a gay bachelor, and have not determined to leave my lands to other people’s bairns.”

“Well, well,” rejoined Stoneyards. “I hope, at all events, that ye hae brought a good appetite with ye, for we are just staerving ; it is noo past five o’clock, and I’m sure the dinner’s burned to a stick.”

“Yes, indeed,” answered Miss Jamesina ; “and my dear uncle will take cold standing here without his hat. Put on your hat, uncle ; ye are among friends, ye know, and there is no use for so much ceremony.”

The doctor gave his arm to the speaker, in her quality of *dame du château*, while the rest of the party followed, rushing up stairs with noise enough, as one of the elderly cousins declared, “to deave a miller.”

“Since it is so near the dinner-hour, and we are pressed for time,” said the doctor, looking round on the assembled party, when they had all reached the drawing-room, “my friends will, I trust, excuse me while I take off the dust I have brought with me. I shall not keep you long waiting.”

Cussim Ali understood his master’s signal, and departed to open his portmanteau.

“Hoot,” said Stoneyards, hastily, “hoot, Fernbraes, ye are no going to dress noo ; ye are as well dressed as man can be : did ever anybody see the like, when the dinner is just coming on the table !”

“Indeed, uncle, ye are too particular,” joined Miss Jamesina ; “ye forget that ye are among friends, and there is no use for so much ceremony.”

“Excuse me, Jamesina ; I am not fit to come into lady’s society with the dust of a turn-pike road on my face, and thistle-down in my hair ; but an old bachelor’s toilet is not very long, and I beg that you will not detain dinner on my account, Jamesina. Mr. Sinclair, I beg that you will not wait a moment for me.”

“Heard ever any one the like !” said Mrs. M’Askel. “No, no, laird, it would be but a bad beginning if we were to sit down to dinner the first day in your own house without you at the foot of the table. We know better what is due to the head of the house than such a thing as that.”

“Between you all,” said Stoneyards, “the end of the matter will be, that the dinner will be burned to a cinder. Ceremony on a’ sides is but sma’ proof o’ friendship, and what I hae never given into with my friends, as ye see, Fernbraes.”

“Do not break through your old custom, then, for me, Mr. Sinclair. Nothing but the impossibility of doing otherwise would make me keep my friends waiting for a moment.”

“Well, well, as ye are determined to go, and the ladies to wait, and let the dinner take its

chance, the best thing that can be done is to waste no more time in talking about it ; the sooner this dressing is begun, the sooner it will be finished.”

“A reasonable conclusion. Ladies, I pray excuse,” said the doctor, leaving the room.

“How particular for an old man !” said Miss Jamesina, when he was out of hearing.

“How civil !” said Mrs. M’Askel.

“Yes, if there were any young ladies who had seen the world to dress for,” said her brother Hector, casting a contemptuous glance upon his country cousins and sisters, and strutting up to the glass over the chimney-piece, and adjusting his neckcloth.

“For my part, I don’t see the use of taking all that trouble only among a person’s family,” said Mr. Hugh, balancing his leg over the arm of a large chair, into which he had thrown himself ; “I would rather see my dinner than anything in the world at this minute.”

“The only reasonable speech that I have heard among you,” joined his father ; “how any man can think of his outside in place of his inside at this hour, is what I do not well understand.”

Mrs. M’Askel, for the benefit of some of her hearers, persisted in applauding her uncle’s practice ; and Jamesina, though she feared the dinner might suffer by it, was disposed to regard it as an indication that a man who was so particular about dress could be not altogether indifferent about furniture ; and she permitted her fancy to please itself with the alterations her taste designed, and which she prognosticated his would sanction, in the decorations of the old-fashioned drawing-room they occupied at the moment.

Mr. Hector, who had been at the college of Edinburgh, consequently might be supposed to know something of these matters, cast a critical glance on the neckcloth of his uncle as soon as he entered the room, and, running up familiarly towards him, offered to arrange it for him in a manner “*plus comme il faut*.”

“Thank you, Hector,” said the wearer, dryly, “I have been accustomed to wear my neckcloth in this way for the last five-and-twenty years, and no one ever touches it but Cussim Ali.”

“Five-and-twenty years,” echoed Mr. Hector, bursting into a loud laugh, in which his brother joined, taking down his leg, however, from its graceful position across the arm of the chair. “Wear a tie of the same kind for five-and-twenty years ! Why, my dear sir, the fashion changes with us every three months, and nobody that has seen the world would be behind the fashion.”

Here the speaker threw a triumphant glance on the row of young ladies before whom he was politely standing, with his feet spread and his hands thrust into his pockets.

“That is to say, Hector,” answered his uncle, “those whose world is bounded by the Tweed ; but there are more things beyond it than you dream of in your philosophy, and among the number is, that men never occupy themselves with their own egotistical concerns in the presence of ladies,” he said, bowing to the circle as he spoke.

“Thank you, Fernbraes,” said Mrs. M’Askel, who, in her character of matron, considered

herself called upon to render thanks for the less privileged members. "We shall all thank you for such a good lesson."

"A fine sort of a lesson, indeed!" interrupted the incorrigible Hector; "it would be long before I would let a black touch my neckcloth."

The whole party, one after another, now asked the doctor if he did not admire the prospect from the windows—if he had ever seen anything like it; and, as his rapture did not come up to their expectations, Stoneyards declared that he did not deserve to have such a fine place when he thought so little of it; and that it had been greatly improved since it came under his management. He informed him how much help he had upon his shores, how many sheep he could pasture, and then launched into a long detail of the fishings, which led him to the county meetings.

All the time he was speaking, as the doctor afterward confessed to a friend, he was sitting thinking within himself how it could be that he could hear all these things with so little pleasure. "If anybody at Lucknow had told me the like," he said, "I would have sat up all night to hear him; but when the thing was before my eyes, it could not please me, and I felt a sort of unreasonable vexation that people should expect me to occupy myself about such matters—or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that I was provoked that they should take me for one of themselves. Stoneyards' voice closed my ears and my heart against every word he had to say."

CHAPTER XX.

"A change we have found there, and many a change,
Faces, and footstep, and all things strange!
Gone are the heads of the silvery hair,
And the young that were have a brow of care,
And the place is hushed where the children played:
—Naught looked the same but the nest we made!"

Mrs. HEMANS.

BEFORE Mr. Sinclair had done detailing these important matters to Dr. M'Alpin, the same liveried attendant thrust in his white head to say, "Dinner's ben." The doctor recollected the consummah's folded hands and profound salaam; but the company, like a flight of Brahminee kites, started from their seats at the summons, hardly giving him time to offer his arm to Mrs. M'Askel, the only married lady present; for, as Miss Jamesina informed him, she had only asked the nearest friends. The young ladies of all ages, or "the lassies," as Stoneyards familiarly called them, followed; and while the courteous young laird drew up the tops of his riding-boots until they had settled their precedence, and then sneaked after them to the dining-room, where, with as much noise as they rose, they all sat down again.

At the bottom of the room, in a capacious chimney, blazed a great peat-fire, surrounded by a regiment of bottles. "Look at that, Fernbraes, and see what a good steward I have made for ye!" cried his brother-in-law; "I havena let them, like a' the rest o' the spend-thrifts in the country, burn coals from the next borough town, when ye hae enough on your own estates for the hale country side, only for the trouble of casting."

The doctor was manfully resolved that on that day no word of complaint should pass his lips; he should take everything just as he found it, and arrange things more to his own taste afterward.

A large dish of fresh boiled salmon, which might contain three or four fish cut up into slices, smoked at the bottom of the table—a tureen of *hodge-podge* at the head—a side of roast-mutton, and four boiled fowls, all in a row, faced each other. In the centre, a capacious dish of some sort of cream stood curdling in the steams of the fish.

The doctor made an attempt to seat himself away from the fire by Mrs. M'Askel, but Miss Jamesina, taking the head of the table, loudly called upon him to take his own place in his own house, at the foot; a proposal which was echoed from mouth to mouth all round the table, in the midst of shuffling of feet, and pushing in and out of chairs, sufficient of themselves to unstring the best set nerves, without the addition of the peat-fire, on which the doctor cast a look as he placed himself before it.

The lady of the mansion remarked, "It's no usual for us, uncle, to have such fires in the month of June; but knowing in the Indies ye were accustomed to be warm, I was afraid that ye might take cold; and, indeed, a fire is no a bad thing here any day in the year when we have an east wind."

"It was kindly remembered, Jamesina; but, as I have not been used to sit near fires for many a year, I will thank you for a screen," answered her uncle.

The screen was brought, and the business of the table fairly commenced, or, as Stoneyards expressed it, "every one fell to." The master of the feast was sitting in misery behind the smoking salmon; and, to add to his annoyance, Miss Jamesina frequently reproaching him with setting a bad example to the company.

Stoneyards, as soon as he could clear his mouth and spare a moment for speaking, remarked that "the laird had certainly forgotten to bring his appetite home with him; but that, if he stayed any time among them, it would be sure to follow him overland"—a witticism and prophecy which was received with great delight by the hearers; and he went on:

"But since, for the present, ye winna eat, laird, ye'll no hae forgotten to drink; that's one of the things memory never fails in. Here's to your hearty welcome, and the speedy arrival of your appetite."

Thus challenged, the doctor was obliged to acknowledge the civilities showered upon him with unsparing hand; and, though he had not, for many a long year, seen Port wine, he was obliged to swallow the harsh liquid in its worst and half-boiled state.

The table was no sooner cleared and covered with decanters, which were misty by the smoking wine poured into them, than a round of boisterous toasts were drunk to his "welcome to his native land and the house of his fathers."

"May the M'Alpins flourish!" roared out Stoneyards. "Gentlemen, fill your glasses; and ladies too, ye must do the same: ye canna pass the toast. Here, young man," he said, addressing his son and heir, "ye are a M'Alpin by name

and by nature—fill to the brim, and drink, "May the M'Alpins flourish!"

Then followed "The ancient roof-tree of Fernbraes;" and fifty more toasts, containing the same sentiment in a different form.

Had Dr. M'Alpin beheld his table surrounded by those he would have wished to have seen there—by those who really felt interest in his wellbeing and happiness—his kind heart would have been gratified; but the people at that moment around him looked upon him and his fortune as their own prey, and their servility and hypocrisy were doubly disgusting. Stoneyards was a sort of man Dr. M'Alpin never could have liked at any time, and least of all in his own father's chair; for he occupied the very spot his excellent parent filled the last day he dined in that house with his revered grandfather, before his departure for India. The whole scene came to his mind in forcible contrast—the quiet kindness and tender affection he had then experienced, compared with this boisterous revelry. The faces were all strange to him; not one of the children resembled his sister, nor any of his own family; they were all their father's children, and the more he saw and heard them, the less he liked any of the number. His brother-in-law's apparent resolution to force Hugh M'Alpin Sinclair upon him as his next heir, was as revolting to the doctor's feelings of independence as it was to his affection for Malcolm, who was the nephew and the heir after his own heart, and who, from the first hour of their meeting, he resolved should inherit from him the possession of his ancestors.

When the ladies left the room, the men drew in their chairs with double good-will, and seemed to be set in for hard drinking, thinking all other testimonials of their joy imperfect without such a glaring proof; though, unwilling that time should slip away without profit as well as pleasure, they pulled out their pocket-books, and produced samples of wool, talking of merinoes, and black-faces, and markets as if they had been butchers and wool-merchants in the bazar. This was more than the good doctor could stand; and, though on pain of forfeiting his character for hospitality, which he valued as much as any man, he rose the moment Miss Jamesina sent to say that tea was ready, and begged Mr. Sinclair to take his place, at the same time telling him he would much better fill it—which, indeed, seemed to be his own opinion; for, before the door was shut after the released doctor, he heard him say, as he seated himself at the foot of the table, "I doubt the laird has been changed upon his passage home, and it's no a genuine Highlander they have sent us after all."

Upon the doctor's arrival in the drawing-room, the ladies complimented him upon his goodness in coming at the first summons; and his niece, Mrs. M'Askel, said with a sigh, which evinced her personal interest in the subject, "Indeed, laird, it's easy to see that ye hae travelled and learnt other manners than what's common here. It's no our gentlemen that would come at the first call; there they'll sit and better sit, until they canna see their way up stairs. Indeed, Fernbraes, ye figure by comparison, and the ladies in the Indies hae a fine time o' it, if every one is like you in that particular."

But, after all these praises, and hundreds more

of the same kind had been bestowed upon the doctor, he did not find the conversation in the least more agreeable or more to his taste than that from which he had escaped below. Miss Jamesina, who had evidently an intention to vie with the splendours of Kelpfield, the seat of a neighbouring laird lately returned from the West Indies, entered into a long detail of all the improvements the present proprietor, Mr. Murdoch Ross, had made and was making.

"Ye'll remember Kelpfield, uncle," she said; "though when ye kenned it had another name—Inchbraken it was called in those days; but the present laird, who is a man of taste, couldna bear such an old-fashioned name, and so he calls it Kelpfield."

"Inchbraken!" answered the doctor; "and has any one had the folly to change the respectable, well-known name of Inchbraken into such a new fangled conceit as Kelpfield! Oh, well, do I remember Inchbraken, and the friend of my youth, who was there then with his grandfather, as I was here with mine. Kenneth Ross was as kind and true a heart as ever left the Highlands, and as brave a one, too, as ever faced his country's foes; but he was massacred somewhere on the coast by a troop of wild Arabs. He died without children, I fancy, and grief broke his wife's heart. And is this a brother of his who has the good sense and right feeling to modernize the name of the old place!"

"Yes; and he has modernized the house too, and everything about it, so much that nobody could guess that it was the same place. You that like elegance, uncle, will, I warrant, be quite charmed with the tasty, cheerful way in which he has done up the old black drawing-room. He has garred tak down all the oak panels, and put in mirrors in their place, upon such a beautiful pea-green ground, with rose-coloured borders; and he has China silk chairs and couches, with all the birds and flowers painted on them that ever grew. You, that have been accustomed to such fine things, will be quite delighted, I am sure; and he has gold eagles, and snakes, and lions' feet, to hold up every table and window-hanging. Oh! he has more taste than anybody in such things, and I hope, uncle, ye will just take pattern by it, and do up this room just in the same way."

"We shall have time enough to think of all such things," said the doctor, laughing. "I like the oldest things about the house better than the new; and I may not, perhaps, be just such an admirer of Mr. Murdoch Ross's improvements, when I have seen them, as you seem to be."

"But ye know, uncle," returned the pertinaacious Jamesina, "that the M'Alpins is a much older family in the country than the Rosses; and lately, Miss Abby that was, Mrs. M'Viper that is, has taken a great deal on herself over me. I remember the time, in her stepmother's life, when she would have been very glad to come to Stoneyards, and to go and stay at my bidding."

The doctor, heartily tired of this gossip, made a second retreat, upon pretence of seeing what had become of the gentlemen below. He snatched up his hat in the hall, which still, as well as the rest of the house, was full of the fumes of dinner and whiskey-punch, which issued through the long passage of the kitchen, where a jovial

band of vassallers was drinking his welcome to the home of his forefathers, in libations deep enough to float a man-of-war. He looked in upon them for a moment, and his presence was greeted by a clang like the seafowl from the rocks. Every man started upon his feet, and, filling his horn to the brim from the tub round which they were seated, drank many happy returns of the blessed day which had brought the rightful heir to Fernbraes under his own roof-tree. "Prosperity to the ancient house of M'Alpin; and may it grow and flourish until there will not be room round the hearthstone for the numerous branches!"

The doctor cordially shook hands with every individual present; and, after thanking them for their good wishes, and saying something kind to each, he in turn proposed a toast: "To the health of Malcolm Sinclair, and his speedy return among us."

"A genuine shoot of the old tree," said an ancient tenant; "and as like his own mother, and the race of M'Alpin, as one herring is to another."

"And as like them in the spirit as he is in the body," answered honest Duncan, who acted as master of the ceremonies. "Here's to the health of the brave sailor, and may he soon win name."

Dr. M'Alpin felt more gratified by the testimonies of kindness for his young favourite, which he believed to be sincere, than by all the professions which had been made for himself in the midst of his own relations. He turned to ask the housekeeper what had become of his solitary Cussim Ali, who was not to be seen.

"Indeed, your honour, I dinna ken; but the black man is no way sociable; for when I desired him to sit down and drink the laird's welcome home with the rest, he made a face and shook his head as if such things warn a natural and proper, and that it wasna fit for man, woman, and bairn to drink their honoured master's joyful return. It's his ignorance, maybe, poor black creature. But let it be what it likes, I would be sorry to see any one less than comfortable on such a day; and since it seems to be his pleasure, I just let him ben to the library, where there is a good fire, and no a single soul to disturb him; and there he is sound asleep on the rug at this blessed minute."

"It was well done, and kindly, like yourself, Elspat," answered her master. "I have not forgotten what ye used to do for me; and ye'll no think the worse of him that he has left his own country and his own people to follow me here, though he does not drink my health or say much about it. He is in good hands with you, I know, Elspat."

"Ye needna doubt that, or any one that likes ye, Fernbraes," said the old woman, proud of her master's remembrance; "and if he has left his own to come with you here, it's a sign that there may be a kind heart in a black breast, and that's a thing that Elspat Corbat never set light by yet."

A boisterous shout reached the doctor's ears as he passed the dining-room, and quickened his pace as he stole from the house, and made his way to the "summer-house," or the "temple," or the "mosque," as it was alternately called, and sat himself down on a bench, overcome with vexation, the east wind, and the provoking con-

viction that this was the very place he had used to think the paradise of the whole earth.

"Oh! many a time," he thought, bitterly, looking out upon the sea, black as ink, under the ruffle of the cutting breeze, and the thick fog rolling down over the hills, "many a time, in the days of my youth, have I wandered upon yon shore, and looked up at this place, and thought that it was the most beautiful beneath the sun, and that I would be the happiest man his bright beams e'er shone upon if I could come home and call it my own; and this very spot, upon which I am now sitting, how *dear* it has been to my heart. How often I have laid myself at full length on the purple heath, and looked out on the hills and the blue rolling sea, and wished to know what was beyond them; and when that wish was gratified, and that I had seen other hills and other lands, the remembrance of this spot always remained, and I thought I should like to have a shelter over my head on the very place where I first made the resolution to go to India. When the tidings of my grandfather's death reached me at Lucknow, and that this place, which always remained in my mind as lovely as my young fancy thought it, was become my own, I did not forget this spot, where I had so often watched the sun rise on one hand and set on the other, and I thought then that I would just take the pattern of the mosque at the foot of my garden on the Goompty, and send it home to have one like it built on this place; but I see—I see," he said, talking to himself, "that they have not done me justice; masons in this part of the world do not understand the making of domes."

The fact was, that the good doctor, like Sir Roger de Coverley with his will, had made his plan at Lucknow in a hot day in the rains, when there was hardly a breath of air in circulation; and, though it was not common for mosques to have so many doors, nor did he find them in his original, yet, as his was to be a summer-house, he inserted four in his plan, facing the cardinal points, that he might never feel the want of fresh supplies of the thin element, which, at the moment, seemed to have stagnated around him.

He surveyed the melancholy landscape through the mist. "So it is for *this*," he thought, "that I have pined through the best years of my life, and now left the friends with whom I lived in ease and friendship, to come among animals like those that are at this moment under my roof; and yet they are most of them my dear sister's children, but no more like her, or like what I figured them to be, than this mosque is like what I intended it. I looked round upon every face among them, and did not see a trace of one that I had ever seen before, or that looked with pleasure upon me, except for interested motives. It is true that I am old, and may be nervous and particular, and not just an object to love at first sight; but yet I have been used to affection here, and perhaps miss it more than in any other place. The cordiality with which the tenants drank Malcolm's health was more to me than anything I have met with since I set foot in Fernbraes."

The good doctor's painful speculations so completely absorbed his mind, that he forgot he was indulging them at a time which would certainly be thought ill-chosen; on a day which every one but himself, the principal party, had

combined to spend in merriment, and which, but for the sharp remonstrance of the piercing easterly wind, might have altogether escaped his memory. Stimulated, however, by such a remembrancer, he retraced his steps, and, as soon as he had opened the drawing-room door, a storm of reproaches was unmercifully poured upon him, instead of the praises with which his last entrance had been greeted.

"Where have ye been, uncle?" cried Miss Jamesina; "ye have been wanted to lead off the dance with Mrs. M'Askel, of Long Byars."

"Fernbraes! hae ye left the ladies as ye left us?" shouted Stoneyards, with a roar of half-intoxicated merriment. "They didna even gain what we lost, it seems."

"What do they dance in the world beyond the Tweed?" pertly demanded Hector. "For our part, we never dance anything but quadrilles in Edinburgh; but perhaps, Fernbraes, you stick to what was the thing five-and-twenty years ago."

Wine had encouraged Mr. Hector to make this pert sally, and it had also given his elder brother assurance to join his rough laugh in chorus, though their father had still sufficient sense of his interest left to see that the subject was not well chosen, and perhaps might not be well taken; he therefore, after his fashion, tried to put the matter right. "Na doubt!—na doubt but ye dance a' these fine things, Fernbraes; but we that hae never been out of the country stick to our oldfashioned ways. My daughter has been waiting all this time to begin the dance with you."

"I never dance," answered the doctor.

"Never dance!" exclaimed every one at once. "Impossible! It cannot be! Ye are no lame; for what shouldna ye dance?"

"I made myself quite sure that ye would certainly lead off the first dance in your own house," said the married lady.

"I have left off dancing for many a long day and year," said the doctor, "and never regretted it but now that it disappoints you, Mrs. M'Askel—"

"Surely ye'll try," said Miss Jamesina, "if it be only to walk through the figure. I'll learn ye: here, ye have only to stand here, and turn there," said the officious instructor; "nothing is so easy." But her uncle stood proof against her entreaties and instructions, though he plainly perceived that he lost as much ground in the opinion of the ladies as he had done in that of the gentlemen by his flight from the table.

"Every man to his taste," said Stoneyards. "For my part, I like a dance," and the uncouth monster reeled up to an elderly lady, whom he familiarly called his second wife, and, seizing her by both wrists, dragged her into the middle of the apartment, while the doctor heard the rest say, in whispers to each other, "Not like dancing! What can he be made of! Never dance! I wonder what's the good of him."

When it was at length yielded that the master of the mansion was not to be forced to dance or made to stalk about for the amusement of his guests, the dancers commenced, and he was at liberty to consider by what means he could change the society into which he had been cast. For the present his hopes were distant; but he did not, however, despair; for he justly

concluded that it would perhaps be impossible in the whole country to find another family so vulgar and ignorant as that of his brother-in-law—his sister's he could not bear to call them: when he thought of Malcolm, it was always as his sister's son; the others he only considered as their father's children.

The party were all to sleep in the house, their own homes being too far distant to admit of their crossing moors and bogs at such an hour of the night, though they were then in a season of the year, and a country where there is little darkness in the month of June. After a supper something in the style of their dinner, but even going beyond it in riotous festivity, the guests and their exhausted entertainer retired to rest.

When Dr. M'Alpin was quietly in his own room, and the door shut after him (for Cusim Ali, sound asleep in a corner, could not be deemed an interruption), he found, for the first time, that he was at home. The chamber was one that his respected parents had always occupied when they visited his grandfather, and everything in it remained exactly as they had used it; both their pictures hung upon the wall, and his own when a boy, with his dog Ryno beside him. This picture had been a great favourite of his dear mother's, and the blue Highland bonnet which he had worn in those days she had hung on a nail over it. He took up a candle, and looked upon her calm, sweet face, which seemed to gaze upon him again, and felt, if possible, with tenfold force, the loneliness and emptiness of his return.

"And is this all that remains to me?" he said, speaking aloud, as usual; "are these shadows all I possess? My hopes and expectations, like the originals, are laid in the dust; and yet to have these semblances of my honoured parents look down upon me with what I can fancy a smile, is balm to my heart after such a day as this; it seems an earnest that I shall yet have one I love under this roof."

He turned, and saw his sister's picture in a place where he had not before observed it. The likeness to Malcolm struck him as a prognostic that his wishes would be realized.

"If Malcolm were but here," he thought, "I would still have some enjoyment in this house—one member of my family whose society would be a pleasure."

But his return was uncertain, and, in the mean time, what was to be done? The doctor lay awake half the night to determine upon what step to take, and at last resolved to see the country in better weather, and make acquaintance with his neighbours before he fixed his plans; most of them, he thought, must be different from those he had that day seen or heard of.

His father and mother had been born and bred in the Highlands, but he was a gentleman and she a lady; and, though not what the world calls fashionable, they were both full of good sense, and kind and liberal feeling, and kept their establishment in ease and abundance, equally distant from selfish meanness and ostentatious folly; and his grandfather's table, too, was in his time the resort of the worthy and respectable in the county—different from what he had that day seen it, surrounded by vulgar, upstart people, who seemed to consider them-

selves quite at home there, and talking of their improvements, gentility, and style—it was too much.

CHAPTER XXI.

"So little knows she how to value right
The good before her, but perverts best things
To worst abuse, or to their meanest use."

MILTON.

Miss JAMESINA SINCLAIR, as has already been mentioned, was named after her uncle by the common expedient of attaching a feminizing *ina* to the noun masculine, a circumstance which procured her the invitation which had made her mistress at Fernbraes, and which she hoped might eventually give her even a more secure right to that title. She knew her uncle's estate was not entailed, and perfectly at his own disposal; but less penetration than hers was sufficient to convince her that neither of her brothers then at home were likely to be the heirs of his choice.

Her brother Malcolm, indeed, of whom her uncle spoke with such affection (but then she did not fail to remember that his profession was so dangerous that perhaps he would not stand in any one's way)—he was absent; his return was precarious, and she knew nothing of the affection which can subsist without the presence of its object. She was present to take advantage of every little circumstance which chance might throw in her way, and by obsequious attentions and winning insinuations, efface him from her uncle's memory; and was disposed, in her partial acquaintance with human character, to consider the decided preference which her uncle, in his extended acquaintance with the heartlessness and selfishness of mankind, felt for her generous and gallant brother, as a mere caprice of age, which good management might turn to her account.

In her father's house Jamesina had comparatively little scope for the exercise of the talents with which she was endowed; though she had early in life given a striking proof of her economical foresight, by sowing her little piece of ground she was permitted to call her *own* with flax, which she afterward spun with her own hands, had wove into a web, and had sold for her by a confidential agent at the Martinmas market; while the old women about the family prophesied "that Miss Jamesina would be a rich lady, for she was a canny hand."

After the death of her mother, when the family management devolved upon her, she found means still farther to increase her private purse, counting the contents of which was one of her most heartfelt enjoyments, and the most powerful solace under the harsh treatment her father made her experience when he was ruffled by hard bargains, or the insolence of her elder brother, when he broke out, as he sometimes did, in invectives upon her penurious management and increased expenses.

Translated to Fernbraes, a more extensive field was opened for her operations, and she gave many a night to the consideration of the best means of employing such golden opportunities. The old housekeeper, indeed was likely

to prove the most considerable obstacle; and, as it was impossible to act without her knowledge, the prudent lady resolved to use her as a blind instrument, and accordingly, from the day of her instalment, issued her orders for the sale of the superfluous produce of the dairy, poultry-yard, and garden, adding the proceeds wisely to her private hoard.

This manner of proceeding caused her to wrangle with the servants about unnecessary consumption, and she wished to deny them the reasonable comforts of their situation. Once she ventured to insist with old Elspat that Cusim Ali was to have no more rice, and fresh butter, and chickens for his curry in the morning, but might just take porridge like the rest. "Fish we need aa grudge him, and he may tak that for his curry as often as he likes, and well off he is to get it too." And it was not till the old woman proposed her master as an arbiter in the customs of black people, which he must know more of than she could pretend to do, that Miss Jamesina was forced to yield the point, though she said "Three hundred and sixty-five chickens a year for the use of such a creature, to say nothing of other things, was an expense shamefu' to be told, and it was sinful to indulge such pagan creatures in their idolatrous superstition. Not eat good oatmeal, indeed! If she had the will, she would make him fast until he would be glad to scrape the porridge-pot. Him refuse to eat beef and long kail! it would set the black face of him! She never saw any good of servants put over their betters with such indulgence."

To fill her private purse in her own way, in case of accidents, which Miss Jamesina wisely considered might occur even to the most long-sighted and meritorious in such a changeable world, and to rival the splendours of Kelpfield, were two projects which had at first occupied all her attentions; now another began to rise, which seemed day by day to become more feasible and practicable.

Murdoch Inchbraken, as he used to be called, lately returned from the West Indies with a large fortune to take possession of the patrimony of his elder brother, Captain Ross, who had many years before died in India, had shown Miss Jamesina much more attention than she was in the habit of generally meeting with from any but the inhabitants of the little town of Drumduir, when she occasionally honoured them with her presence. This unwonted occurrence set her active imagination to work, and the more she thought upon it, the more likely it seemed that it was his intention, among his other changes and improvements, to make her mistress of Kelpfield.

"At present he must think that I shall be my uncle's heiress, and to a reasonable man as he is, who has spent so many years of his life in making money, that must be a great thing. If I could only get this stiff-necked old man to new furnish the house in my taste, or the drawing-room at least, that would confirm people in the notion. Surely nobody was ever harder trysted than I am between two, when, if I take the least open means to gain the one, I may lose the other. Oh! if I could only know which it would be best to trust to! But fair and softly; I'll take no rash steps till I see how the boys

are to roll. If this uncle of mine should take it into his head to marry—and there is no saying what queer thoughts come into old men's heads—what would I be then?"

Miss Jamesina turned over in her plotting head all the probabilities on the subject. "Robina Ross is too old," she thought: "at his age, however sensible a man may be, he always chooses a young wife—but then my uncle is no like any other living creature. However, if such a tantrum does come into his head, it will go hard with me but I shall find ways and means to break it;" for she very reasonably concluded that the only use of uncles who had made fine fortunes in India was to enable their nieces to cut a figure in the country, give them the means of mortifying and triumphing over their friends, die bachelors, and leave their fortunes to those who could take much better care of them, and who knew better how to enjoy them.

Thus thought the amiable Jamesina, as she sat (like a spider watching his prey) in the midst of the webs of her own fabrication. "I must just try to supplant my brother Malcolm in my uncle's good graces, or, at all events, get influence enough with him to make people think that he will leave all to me; and if I could but manage that, I'm thinking I could get Kelpfield into the bargain, and then I could easily send Robina out of my way; and while all that is doing, for perhaps it will take time, I had better look after the little present gleanings in case of accidents: a well-filled purse is always a good back friend."

Stoneyards, too, as well as his daughter, had his own private projects; and he thought, for sundry reasons which may appear hereafter, that the sooner some of them were put into execution, the better would be their chance of success. He therefore "rode over" one morning, willing to commence operations. In the stone lobby he met his daughter, who always liked to be at hand, and to know who went and came to the house.

"Is Fernbraes in the way, Jamesy?" he demanded, when he hung up his hat.

"Yes—do you want to see him for anything particular?"

"I want to speak with him alone," answered her father.

"He is above in the drawing-room, or the hall as he calls it, for he never gives things names like any other body."

Her father was too full of the business upon which he had come to waste time in talking, and, as soon as she heard his last heavy foot-step mount the stairs, she followed him, in the amiable intention of knowing more than he seemed disposed to tell her; and, opening a closet on the upper landing-place in which china was kept, she took her station, where she could easily hear through a thin partition every word that passed in the next room.

Her father commenced by a long detail of his losses and crosses in sheep-farming, most of which he attributed, notwithstanding his own superior prudence and sagacity, to the small scale upon which, for want of ready cash, he had been obliged to carry on his concerns. He spoke much of the credit that was requisite to carry on such a business with profit. Then he told of a famous opportunity which had that

morning come to his knowledge, of making a purchase which would make a man of him at once, if he had only the ready money to advance for it, and ended by making a demand for credit on her uncle's banker.

The doctor had listened all the time in perfect silence; now she heard him ask,

"What is the sum requisite for your projected extension of your concerns?"

Even *she* was surprised, well as she knew her father, to hear the answer,

"I canna just tell—I dinna just ken; but there is no use to set down any precise sum. If ye will give me a letter to your banker for whatever I may have need for, it will be all right, and I will be able to make this purchase, so much for the advantage of my family, and which will put me above the necessity of troubling my friends in time to come."

"Very likely," she heard her uncle say, in a bitter tone; "and all that is requisite from me to do that is to give an unlimited credit on my banker!"

"Just that," answered the undaunted Stoneyards. "Where is the use of putting a limit, when I canna precisely tell how much may be required?"

"The use of putting a limit!" By this time the doctor had lost all patience. "The use of putting a limit! and do you think"—the doctor always spoke broad Scotch when he was animated—"that, after spending the last thirty years of my life far from my native land and the friends that I loved—for then I *had* friends," he said, with emphasis, "to make a fortune, I am come back to scatter it to the wind, and give credit on my banker without limit! I wonder what sort of a spirit a man can have that can ask such a thing!"

"Ye are my wife's brother, and I didna think it was such a great thing to ask you to help me with your name, particularly when your money was not to be in danger."

"Not in danger, say you? not in danger when I give an unlimited credit! No, no, I will never put it out of my own power to help those that have, or may have claims upon me. As ye say, I am your wife's brother; and if one thousand, or even two thousand can serve you, ye shall be welcome to it; but never let me hear of credit upon bankers!"

Stoneyards grumbled out his thanks, though his daughter thought, from the tone of his voice, that he was far from satisfied with her uncle's liberal donation. She remained quietly in her concealment until she heard his ponderous steps upon the stairs, and then made good her retreat. By her act of meanness she had gained a farther insight into her uncle's character, which she resolved to use for her own purposes.

"It is curious," she thought, "what a power my mother's name has over him; it is like oil on the raging sea. This fashion of giving away his money will never do; for if, after all, he should take into his head to make one of my brothers the heir of Fernbraes (and there is no saying what the male line may make him do—senseless creatures though they be, one and all of them, and no more fit to be compared wi' me than Hugh is to Kelpfield)—but if such a foolish notion does take him, and he goes on at this

rate, he will not have a shilling of ready money left for me. It is true that I could, with one word of my mouth, if I were to tell him all that he wants to know about his old nurse Madge M'Lean, put an end to his ever giving a sixpence or speaking a word to my father, and Hugh, and Hector; but he is so queer in his ways, that if I were to do that it would only make him, maybe, think the more of Malcolm, whom he has taken it into his head is just my mother. It would be wiser for me, perhaps, to 'let sleeping dogs lie;' for if he kent that my father and brothers garred send away the old woman for a witch, his blood would be too much up to conceal who told him, and then perhaps they wad let out something that wadna be so well for me; so I'll just take no notice of what is past, and let him be doing his ways. After what he said to my father, he canna, I think, wi' ony face come back. Hector is setting off for his 'prenticeship, and Hugh is such a nout that my uncle canna abide him.

"If Malcolm were but like them, I think I wad hae but little to fear; but his senseless, harum-scarum way of giving money to every idle old wife about the country is too like Fernbraes' own tricks not to be upheld by him; and besides, it has gotten him such a name among the auld carles and carlines, that my uncle hears his praises as often as he hears his name. Ay, ay, if one wad hae praise in this world, they maun buy it, though I'm sure the praise o' such clishmaclavering halligots is no worth the money that is paid for it. No one can ever say that I made such a fule bargain. It was but last night, no farther gone, that I saw that wastefu', shameless support o' a' prodigality, Elspat Corbat, in the act of sending off a cart with two good bows of oatmeal to auld Donald Robbie, the herd that broke his arm in falling from a rock when he was going after stray ewes; and, forsooth, she had her master's orders to do so. I wish it had choked her; and though there was heated meal in the house, she must needs tak the best, and send it to a useless, feckless body like him. It wad drive a reasonable woman mad to see such lavishing on a' hands. If my uncle wad hae the folly to fling awa' his meal that gate, was it no a good opportunity to send what was fit for no other thing?

"He has spoiled the servants here, both in and out doors, to such a degree, that fint a thing will they eat but what might be put upon her majesty's table in Lon'on. There is no use, however, in letting that heated meal lie for the maggots; and the day after the morn, when Elspat goes to the weavers with the last spun wool for the servant's bed, I'll just get Meg Donaldson to tak the meal to Drumduir, and sell it for what it will bring. Little is aye better than nothing, and every little makes a mickle; and if my uncle is to squander his fortune in thousands at a time, it is fair that I, who have come to his house to take care of him and to look after him, should have a picking of what's going. I wonder if it's no more reasonable and wise-like that I, his niece, should have some sma' benefit, than a' the broken householders and wafe-bodies in the country—and he has no so much as made me the present of a new bonnet ever since he came to this house."

Jamesina, in her anxiety to justify her own

proceedings, had forgotten to enumerate, among her uncle's prodigalities, the handsome allowance he had settled upon her ever since her mother's death, when she hinted, in one of her letters, that her father's large family prevented him from giving her the means of showing all the respect to her dear mother's memory that her heart would prompt her to do. This little circumstance she was anxious to keep from the knowledge of her brothers, therefore had never mentioned it to a living creature, and had almost succeeded in forgetting it herself except when the day of payment came round.

Thus reasoned Miss Jamesina, and thus settled to her own satisfaction her proceedings for the present.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Land of my fathers! though no mangrove here
O'er thy blue streams her flexile branches rear,
Nor scaly palm her finger'd scions shoot,
Nor luscious guava wave her yellow fruit,
Nor golden apples glimmer from the tree—
Land of dark heaths and mountains—thou art free!"

LEYDEN.

MISS JAMESINA SINCLAIR had many fluctuating thoughts upon the means to be used in forwarding her own views upon Kelpfield, without, at the same time, facilitating those which she took it for granted her friend Miss Robina Ross must have upon Fernbraes; but, though the thing was very desirable, it was not very easy to effect. Her uncle could not endure Mr. Murdoch Ross, and he took more pleasure in the society of his sister than in that of any other person in the country; in fact, Miss Robina was the only neighbour always welcome.

Jamesina had tried most industriously to find out some agreeable male friends for her uncle, with whom he might occasionally ask Kelpfield to take a bachelor dinner; but her efforts had hitherto proved unsuccessful, and she found that if she might look for the pleasure of seeing Kelpfield an invited guest at her uncle's house, it could only be in the train of his sister.

Robina, though several years younger, had been the faithful friend of Mrs. Sinclair, and, as such, had an influence of habit over Jamesina, though the difference of their dispositions had prevented more confidential intercourse between them than arose out of their relative situations. At the time of Mrs. Sinclair's death, Robina had become acquainted with some family circumstances of which Jamesina would have been better pleased that she had remained in ignorance, as it was this knowledge gave her an authority with Jamesina, and increased their appearance of intimacy without increasing their confidence. Jamesina, was not the sort of person to share in the feelings of Robina, who, therefore, never spoke to her of what concerned herself; and Robina had what Jamesina considered such strange notions upon things in general, that she was the last person to be taken into her secrecy, or intrusted with her hopes and fears.

In truth, the wily Jamesina was too wary to trust any one with her concerns, and, without knowing it, acted in the full spirit of the generous maxim of the Duc de la Rochefoucault, who

directs the prudent "to treat every friend as if he were one day to become an enemy." Of this she was convinced, that no part of Robina's information would ever be imparted to her uncle; and though there were serious inconveniences attending her growing intimacy at Fernbraes, still Jamesina felt that, if she would give her own projects a fair chance, she must run all risks, and even suffer her uncle to have an inexhaustible store of anecdotes in praise of her brother Malcolm from the lips of his earliest friend Miss Ross, who loved him with almost a mother's love, and who delighted to recount the exploits of "her darling boy," as she always called the young sailor.

"If she marries my uncle," thought Jamesina, "Fernbraes will surely be Malcolm's, that is to say, if he lives to come back, which is not altogether certain; but, seeing that things stand so, there is the greater necessity of my being fixed at Kelpfield; and if he thinks that his sister is likely to come here, it will, perhaps, be a help to me; for it is natural that he might expect her to speak a good word for her own brother's wife, and no for Malcolm."

Satisfied with this conclusion, which she had come to in the course of her usual walk of morning inspection, Jamesina proposed to her uncle at breakfast that, as the day was fine, they should go over to Kelpfield, and ask the laird and his sister to dine with them next day. "I have not seen Miss Robina since last Sunday at the kirk, and I dare say she will wonder what has become of us all."

"I am always glad to see her," answered the doctor, "but I cannot abide that brother of hers—how unlike he is to him I knew! I cannot sit a whole afternoon to drink Port wine with him, and hear a history of his improvements."

"If ye will no drink Port, ye know, uncle, ye can drink Claret; besides, he's wanted to make up your hand at whist, and it wad be less than civil to ask his sister without him."

"Well, well, Jamesy, have it your own way, since ye have set your fancy upon it. It is, as you say, a fine morning, so you may order the horses."

"Wad it no be better to go in the carriage?" demanded Jamesina, "where ye sit more at your ease, and admire the view from Ben Tarrach that ye are so fond of?"

"For that very reason I prefer being in my saddle. I always rode at Lucknow when the sun would let me."

"But don't ye think taking the carriage would look better, when it is to pay a visit?"

"In whose eyes, Jamesina? Do you think a sensible woman like Miss Robina ever thinks of such nonsense?"

"It is not her I am thinking about; she has never been out of the country, and cares nothing about the ways of the world; but her brother, who is far-travelled like yourself, kens very well how everything should be."

"People travel, Jamesina, for very different purposes. Some learn, by experience of mankind, to value truth and sincerity more than empty show, while others go about to pick up their neighbours' faults and follies, and bring them home in addition to their own; and of this kind is the man we are speaking of. It was not enough that nature deified Murdoch Ross the

least shadow of taste or feeling for beauty in one shape or another, but he, to make her nigardliness plain to all the world, must set up for a connoisseur, and a man of taste and fashion. It is not to please such as him that I will ever change an inch of my old ways: if such a creature could have any influence on my actions, it would only be to make me more fond of everything that is different from him and his notions; so if we are to go, Jamesy, let us have the horses."

The horses were accordingly brought, much to Miss Jamesina's dissatisfaction, who had fully proposed to herself the pleasure of paying this visit in a manner much more suited to the future heiress of Fernbraes; but she had tact enough to see that it was in vain to think of arguing the point with her uncle, though she could not help being provoked with the want of consideration which made him never use a handsome equipage but for the night or bad weather. There was, however, no help for it, and Miss Jamesina was obliged to mount her black Highland pony and canter away by the side of her uncle, who was engaged in conversation with Duncan about a sick old woman who lived at the foot of the avenue leading to Inchbraken, and whom he proposed to visit on his way.

It was a fine morning in the beginning of autumn; the heath-covered mountains shone purple in the rays of a cloudless sun, and the waters of the bay danced in light. "This is the scene I remember," said the doctor, as he stopped, on ascending Ben Tarrach, to contemplate the view which opened out at his feet. "There rolls the sea, and there stand mine own mountains, the same as I used to wander over when a boy. Though the world and everything in it changes, nature is always the same. These are the glorious and sublime features which impress Scotland on the hearts of her children, and make them, wander where they will, recall with feelings of filial delight the towering solitudes and fresh mountain atmosphere, which strings the nerves and animates the heart with feelings above the ordinary intercourse of the deceitful, selfish, ambitious herd who struggle onward in life's crowded roads."

Duncan saw that his master was happy, and with the tact of heart, the kindness of kindred feeling, he spoke of the exploits in which they had both taken part, and which were linked in agreeable remembrance with the scenes before them; the game they had killed on these hills, and the successful fishings they had enjoyed in that bay.

The doctor sat upright in his saddle, the scene of action was around him and under his feet; and in retracing the olden time, and seeing the gray rocks, behind whose covert he had often watched the deer, he felt his blood circulate with brisker flow, and his spirits glow with the warmth natural to an enthusiastic mind like his, which may be depressed and chilled, but can never be totally extinguished while the vital spark remains a tenant of its earthly clay.

If imagination be a source of suffering—and who that possesses it does not know how it can aggravate and forerun the evils of life—it is also a source of unalloyed, though transient enjoyment; and the doctor was recalled from its

evanescent dreams by the sight of a fantastic porter's lodge and grotesquely-ornamented gate as he turned down into the sweet little valley where Inchbraken was sheltered (for he absolutely refused to recognise it by its more modern appellation).

The sight of these encroachments brought back to his mind the idea of Jamesina, whose presence he had absolutely forgotten in his more agreeable recollections; but this new odium which dispelled them recalled her, and, looking over his shoulder, he saw her at a little distance, seemingly occupied in her own cogitations, which had been of a very different nature. The gate, however, dispersed them too, and brought back her uncle in place of Mr. Murdoch, who had been the chief object of her reflections; and when he stopped a moment, she rode up by his side to ask him if he did not think that beautiful lodge was a great improvement. "And in putting it there too, he has got rid of a whole row of old thatched cottages, which he took down to make the road wide enough. There is no one of the squad left but auld Nelly Wilson, and she, poor body, is hidden behind the trees there, so that her bit housie does not offend the view of this bonny new erection."

The doctor was unused to contradict women, and his niece's folly appeared at this moment so glaring, that even if he had intended it, he felt that it would be useless; he therefore contented himself with saying, "I am going to see this Nelly Wilson, whose house he has had the grace to spare for such good reasons."

"Was there ever the like seen or heard of?" thought Miss Jamesina, though she gave her thoughts no tongue. "We cannot set a foot out o' our own doors, but he rins into every hole and bore in the whole parish; and then, now, I'll warrant he'll be sending meal and what not to this old carline, whose name he never heard of till this blessed morning. If such things must be done, it's Robina's business to do it, and I'll not stir a foot with my presence to encourage him in such waste. And wha kens, too, what ill diseases people may catch by going near all the sick folk in the country?"

Jamesina entered the gate, and Duncan, as he knew no evil could happen to her in the avenue, followed his master, who soon found that the inward divinings, of which the poor creature complained, were occasioned by want of proper nourishment as much as medicine. He resolved, however, to send her both.

He called to Jamesina, whom he believed to be in waiting at the door; but the lady had moved on. Telling Nelly Wilson that, as soon as he got home, he would send back Duncan with what would do her good, he followed his niece to Kelpfield, where he found her quietly seated on a pea-green silk couch in the drawing-room, listening with complacency and approbation to Mr. Ross's account of the improvements he had made, and all he intended to make. He gave her an inventory of the partitions he had pulled down, the windows he had knocked out, and the doors he had knocked in, with the plastering, papering, painting, and gilding; in short, as he observed, "it would have been easier to build two houses than to modernize one, as he had done."

K

When the doctor made his appearance, wholly occupied, as was his custom, with the business he had in hand, he no sooner despatched his compliments of entrance than he told his niece that he must make their visit shorter than he had intended, for he must take her home to get some things for a poor patient.

Miss Ross interposed with, "Anything you want, doctor, you can get in this house. I am half a doctor myself, and you can have, I dare say, whatever is necessary without loss of time."

"Uncle," said Miss Jamesina, in a hesitating voice, for she was provoked to break up her agreeable conversation for the wants of any creature upon the face of the earth, still more to supply them out of her own store. But there was no alternative if she would not let her friend Robina take an interest in her uncle's concerns, which might be very inconvenient.

"Fernbraes," said Mr. Ross, who gave every one their titles on the principle of doing as he would be done by, "I have just been telling the young lady, your niece, Miss Sinclair, of all my improvements, and I wish to show her what I mean yet to do, and ask her opinion; for, without seeking to praise my own works, I think she has a very fine taste, and knows a great deal about such things."

"Certainly, brother," said Robina; "it is not every person in the country that can look with eyes of admiration upon the changes you have made and are making."

"It requires improvement by travel, or great natural taste, Robina, to judge of such things, and that, you know, does not fall to the lot of all the world," said Mr. Ross, conceitedly, and willing to reward Jamesina's approbation with compliments at the expense of a sister who mortified him by disapproval of his thick-coming innovations.

To Jamesina it was irresistible, and at once determined her to let her uncle run all risks.

"I have, I dare say, what is wanted for the sick woman in the big press in the back parlour," said Robina, putting herself in motion.

"You are right," answered the doctor; "it will be better to let her have some bark and wine, without waiting until it could come from Fernbraes;" and, following Miss Ross to the aforesaid press, he soon procured what was required for immediate use.

"Duncan," he called, as he recrossed the stone lobby, or "hall of entrance," as Mr. Ross chose to denominate it since he had furnished it with chairs, which bore his painted crest upon their backs, "Duncan, take this wine from Miss Ross to Nelly Wilson, and tell her to take a glass every two hours, and I will send what else I spoke of as soon as I get home."

"Is it poor old Nelly that you are speaking of?" answered Robina. "If I had known that she had come back to her own house, for she has been away for some time to visit her daughter in another part of the country, I would have seen her myself, and taken care that she did not want for anything."

"I dare say you would—I am sure of it," said the doctor, with cordial good-nature, at the same time taking her hand with great kindness.

At the moment the drawing-room door opened, and out walked Miss Jamesina, followed by

the laird. She stopped a moment in dismay on observing her uncle and Robina. "Has it come to this already?" she thought.

Kelpfield offered his arm: his sister and the doctor went on with their own affairs, quite unconscious that any action of theirs could be interesting to others; and as Jamesina drew near, and heard the accents of their voices, she felt quite reassured. "It is nothing, after all," she thought; "it is only his way. I dare say he just did the same with old Nelly Wilson, when he was bidding her to take care of herself, and take all the fine things he was to send her—little need to do that, I trow."

These vexatious thoughts were dispelled by the more agreeable voice of her conductor, pointing out to her attention every minute alteration in his house, and asking what she thought of them. "Don't you think, Miss Sinclair, that these verd antique pillars, with red carnelian capitals, give this hall a much more lively appearance than the old lobby used to have, shut in with a door? I have ordered a statue of the Venus of Medicis to be put on the top of the stove, and it is to be quite on a new construction, ornamented in a way that was never seen in this country before. Poor people! they are sadly behind in all that concerns the fine arts—and I shall have an Eolian fiddle in the window. Don't you think that will be truly romantic?"

"Beautiful!" said Miss Jamesina. "But who is to play upon it?"

"The wind," answered her companion, with a smile at his own superior knowledge; "the wind will be the only performer."

"Then it must be one of the things they call Eolian harps," answered the lady. "I thought ye spoke of a fiddle."

"It is all the same—quite the same thing, whether you call it harp or fiddle; but certainly the first is the prettiest name, and sounds the best in a lady's mouth, and I shall always call it so in future," answered the unabashed connoisseur.

Jamesina was more than happy, and the taste and politeness of Mr. Ross stood equally high in her estimation.

"If I could only get Robina to give up that back parlour, what a nice conservatory I could make of it!"

Jamesina was quite at a loss to understand what he could mean; but, before a man of such vast information, she was careful of betraying her ignorance, and waited in hope of illumination.

"I would break out immense windows from top to bottom," he continued, "and fill it with all the rare foreign plants. You have no idea, Miss Sinclair, of what fine flowers we have between the tropics. And I would make a very large glass window to look into it, just over the sideboard in the dining-room; and I would set up a beautiful statue of a shepherdess, or some such thing, painted to look quite natural, with a bird's-nest in her hand; and I would have a bird, too, covered with the natural feathers, to make it look more like the life, fastened upon one of the flower-branches near her, as if it was just going to jump into its nest; and then there should be a glass fountain at the shepherdess's feet, filled with gold-fishes, and a lamb to drink out of it. This should be placed in the middle

of the flowers; and then I would have gilt cages with all sorts of singing birds. Oh, it would be sweetly pretty!"

"What a taste you have, Kelpfield! Did ever mortal imagine the like! To have a view of such wonderful flowers, and hear the birds singing all the time you were eating your dinner. It could not have entered into anybody's head but your own to contrive such a thing—and the statue too, in the midst of them! It is a wonder to me what my dear friend Robina can be made of, when she does not take delight in such things!"

"Nature has denied her your taste, Miss Sinclair, and she won't learn of those who could teach her—there's the pity!"

"How happy they are that might have such teaching!" responded Jamesina. "To think on her preferring to keep that room choked up with presses and bottles full o' useless medicines for a' the idle folk in the country, is more than I can comprehend."

"It's a queer taste indeed, as you very justly observe, and brings all sorts of beggars and vagabonds about the house, whose very sight is shocking to those who can take pleasure in pretty works of art. Poor Robina knows nothing of such pleasures," he continued, with a sentimental shake of the head. "Did you remark my new gate when you came? She pleaded hard with me to let the old one stand, and not take away the row of unsightly useless cottages that used to stand without it, enough to disgrace the approach to a gentleman's house."

"Ye did right, Kelpfield, not to be guided by her there; for, besides making one of the bonniest gates in the country, ye got rid of a wheen plaguy folk, of no use in the world but to fill the kitchen, and eat you out of house and hall; I wish my uncle had but your good sense, and right way of seeing the world; but I doubt he is, like my friend Robina, ower auld to learn, and ye will no tak ill, Kelpfield, anything he may say. Poor man, he has no great taste for improvements, and likes better to glower on bare hills and the lone seashore, than to see all the beautiful things that ye hae done for this place. Indeed, ye may well be proud o' it, for it is so changed for the better that nobody could know it again."

"Not so much as it will be yet, I hope, before I have done with it. Let me have the pleasure just to indicate what I mean to do out of doors, for I have been so busy in the inside that I have not had much time to think of anything but the gate yet, and the rest is, I may safely say, in a state of nature, which, you know, is always frightful and revolting to men of taste—but that will not be the case long. It is unfortunate that the house stands in a valley—I cannot alter that—but I can open it up, and cut down the old trees which block up the view, and get a glimpse of the high road. I like to see what is doing in the living world."

The road which he wished to look upon was the road to Fernbraes, and Jamesina's imagination, though neither very active or very brilliant where her own interest was not concerned, at once suggested that as the cause, and disposed her to view everything with favouring eyes.

"It will be a great improvement," she answered, "and give you, too, wood for the farm

utensils. The trees are most of them come to their full growth—indeed, the valley, as it shelters them from the seabreeze, is very favourable to that, and it would be a pity to lose the use of so much good timber, to say nothing of the fine view ye will gain by it.”

“Very true, Miss Sinclair, yours is a very considerate remark; not like my sister, who would not have a stick cut down, and has a sort of superstitious veneration for these old trees, because some old fool about the house has said that,

‘When at Inchbraken they cut the first pine,
‘Twill pass from the male to the female line!’”

“That is, indeed, a reason that I didna ken,” answered Jamesina.

“But if it was meant for a prophecy,” said the laird, “I’ll disappoint it, and yet have my way. I’ll cut the old oaks and the hard beeches, and even let the few pines stand as they are. Another whim of Robina’s is to like better to walk on the damp grass and moss than on my nice gravel avenue, when I have had it well rolled to break all the seashells in it. Nothing can be more pleasant, so open and airy; there is nothing to keep it from the sun, so that it is always dry and healthy.”

“That’s what I tell my uncle when he is grumbling, as he does every day he goes out, about the old trees that my father cut down, which were good for nothing in the world but to shelter corbies’ nests, wastefu’ beasts that they are, and keep the ground under them covered with useless weeds; ye’ll no believe that, though Fernbraes has been in the Indies like yourself, Kelpfield, he likes the commonest gowan that grows on the roadside better than a’ the plants we have been speaking about. He never ceases lamenting about the exposure of Fernbraes—I wonder what he would be at—well wad I be content wi’ it if it were mine—not that I think it such a pretty place as ye are making this, Kelpfield.”

“You are too good, you are too good, Miss Jamesina, to say so; but I have not shown you yet all that I mean to do; walk this way, if you please, and I’ll show you an improvement which I have set my heart upon, and which I must take the opportunity of doing when Robina goes to spend some weeks with our friends in the North.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Mais ces ruines même ont pour moi des attraits,
Là, si mon cœur nourrit quelques profonds regrets,
Si quelque souvenir vient rouvrir ma blessure,
J’aime à mêler mon deuil au deuil de la nature.
De ces bois désolés, de ces rameaux flétris,
Seul errant, je me plais à fouler les débris.”

DELILLE.

THEY walked up a shady winding path, which brought them to a flat, green, semicircular spot, at the foot of a rocky bank, richly clothed with natural wood; round the circular side of the quiet retreat ran the clear rivulet which watered the valley, and on the most projecting point, under the shade of some fine trees, stood the family burying-place, enclosed by a stone balustrade, ornamented with rustic sculpture.

A more tranquil or retired spot could not have been found in the universe; the repose which

reigned around seemed as profound as that of the dreamless inhabitants who slept within its enclosure. The ivy and the bramble stretched their long rambling sprays from the balustrade round which they twined to the tall trees which drooped over them, and sheltered myriads of birds, the only living creatures who loved to frequent the lonely place. There they at all times dwelt in security, protected by the dead—sportsmen and schoolboys alike shunning the spot; even the cowherd and the shepherd drove their respective charges farther up the glen, unwilling to become ocular witnesses of the strange sights which had in former days been seen there. Every one in that part of the country recollected the wailing sounds which had been heard from out the old enclosure before the fatal news arrived of the murder of the last heir, and the deathlights which had always come over the hill from the east, and fallen into the family burying-ground at Inchbraken.

“Now,” said Kelpfield, when he and his companion had emerged from the shady walk so as to have a full view of the sequestered spot just described, “was there ever such a proof of want of taste as to put that dismal place there. When I have opened up the view, it will be almost in sight of my very drawing-room windows—a cheerful prospect indeed to look upon; but in the olden times I think people had no idea of the elegance and refinements of life; but I shall clear it all away, every stone of it, and with the building materials make an elegant summer-house, painted white. It will stand just in the middle of the green, and give a fine termination to the vista from my new bow-window; and, besides, it will be a nice place to drink a cup of tea in, or to smoke a cigar, or any other reasonable enjoyment.”

“As you say, indeed, that will be a great deal more comfortable,” replied the acquiescing Jamesina, “and a much more pleasant sight near a gentleman’s house than this old place, which only brings black thoughts into a body’s head—time enough to think of it when one cannot help it—such sights always make me dull, though I am no given to melancholy: and, besides the summer-house, which, as ye say, will be another like sort of a thing, I’m thinking ye’ll hae stones enough to make a nice little snug place for the poultry. The geese and ducks wad thrive bonny on that green by the burn—oh! it’s a pleasant sight to see the young ducklings tak to the water, and on such a spot as this they wad na need half the feeding they require for ordinar.”

“A most excellent thought, Miss Sinclair; I will look among my plans of ornamental buildings for a nice pretty thing for the purpose. Men of the first taste now take poultry-houses into their pleasure-grounds, and I’ll have one here, more fit to be looked at than my sister Robina’s in the farmyard.”

“It wad be as well, perhaps, to leave the fools where they are in the farmyard,” observed the economical Jamesina; “they are aye picking, ye ken, about the barn-doors; but for the water-birds, the web-futed race, they would be out o’ sight better here.”

“It is indeed a pleasure, Miss Sinclair, to talk with you about my plans, you enter into them with so much taste. This improvement I never yet have had courage to mention to my sister, because I know that she will be sure to oppose it; for it is one of her fancies to like it, dismal as it

is, better than any nook on my estate. From her youth to the present day she has spent hours here every day."

"And very unprofitably spent I think they were. If she had the young geese to look after, or even the white webs to bleach on yon bonny green, I wad think something o' it; but to come among thorns, brambles, and branches to disturb the rest of them that's no thinking of her, is a thing I wad never think myself answerable to do—and is just another reason why such kind of places should be kept in the kirkyard, where they are no in the way o' being troubled."

Jamesina was delighted with the confidential turn of this conversation. Mr. Ross had complained of the dissimilarity of taste between himself and the manager of his domestic concerns: "Perhaps," she thought, "he may like to have one more to his own mind;" and, by his own account, herself was the only one who had entered into all his views, praised all he had done, and applauded all that was yet in project. She was not so sure that, if she was actually mistress of the place, she would approve of the expenditure of so much money; but it would be time enough to think of that when her own interests were more nearly concerned. At present, the most prudent and the most agreeable part was to praise and admire, and she expressed her approbation in every form she could find, while the laird gallantly assured her that "he never had so much pleasure in showing his improvements to any one as to a lady of her taste."

Miss Jamesina answered with a broad grin, which showed her large, white, strongly-set teeth, "They wad hae very little taste indeed that wad no admire what ye hae done and are to do. I dinna pretend to great taste or skill in these matters, seeing that I hae never been out of the country, but I can say that I hae never seen anything in it to equal the Venus, and the gold-fishes, and the shepherdess, let alone the summer-house, when it comes to be in the place of that old tomb. Indeed, it is surprising to me that anybody with their eyes open can see the place without being struck with the changes."

"I am struck with the changes, for one," said the doctor, who, with Miss Ross, stood at the front of the house, to which the other two were advancing, and who had caught the last words. "I hate changes, and I find everything changed here and hereabouts. The very character of the people is changed; and I meet with nobody like what I used to remember but you, Miss Robina."

"I am glad, Fernbraes," she answered, with her own quiet, good-humoured smile, "that you find in me still a remnant of the good old fashions of the Highlands. The Lowland ways are coming so fast upon us, that if our forefathers could look up out of their graves, they would neither know their own houses or their own children. We send the girls to the boarding-school, and the boys to college, away from the friends that could either control or direct them; and what do we get back but heads turned with conceit and self-importance—vain of knowing how to wear fashions that are dead where they took their birth before they can come to us, and the senseless accomplishments of shaping a few useless things in card-paper? and lairds who cut down the trees that their fathers had planted, drive their tenants, and herrie the country."

"There may be too much truth in what ye say," answered the doctor; "not that I am an

enemy to reasonable improvements, and travel either; but I like to see the difference preserved that there used to be between a Highland gentleman's family and all the little folk of the towns. Our respectability, Miss Robina, depends more upon true hearts than new liveries, and honourable actions than new fashions."

"Yes," she answered; "what need have we, who, like Naomi of old, dwell among our own people, of all the vain distinctions of furniture and dress, which are indispensable to those whom nobody knows anything about?"

"It is not such things as ye say, Miss Robina, that will make a gentleman or a lady—or speaking English either," said the doctor, with a glance of something like scorn on Kelpfield's doubtful pretensions. "It is the sentiments more than the language, and the man, not his clothes."

"But, uncle, you who have travelled so much, and lived in the world," interposed Miss Jamesina, willing to conciliate all parties, "ye are no averse, I am sure, to learning and improvement?"

"No, certainly," echoed Kelpfield; "Fernbraes, as you justly observe, Miss Sinclair, has mixed too much with polite society not to like improvements."

"If ye mean by improvement, Jamesy," answered the doctor, replying to the first speaker, "seeing foreign lands, and studying human nature in all its different forms and workings, I agree with you; but if you mean going abroad to bring home foreign fooleries, not to say vices, and learning to treat with contempt what our forefathers respected, and living in the world only for our own pleasure and our own interest, I despise it."

Jamesina prudently resolved to take no farther part in an altercation where she could not please one party without offending the other, and she hastened to stop it by observing, "But in the beauties of this walk we are forgetting that we came here to ask the pleasure of your company, Miss Robina, and yours, Kelpfield, to take a family dinner with us to-morrow."

The invitation was accepted, and Jamesina took an opportunity, when the other two were engaged, to say, in an under tone to her attendant, "I would have asked a party to meet you, sir, but ye see my uncle's ways, and men must no be contradicted."

"I wish I could say that every one was treated with so much consideration," answered her companion; "but one would think my sister had a pleasure in breaking me in to bear it."

Duncan's appearance with the horses interrupted, or, rather, stifled in its birth, the flattering observation which Miss Jamesina was prepared to make. Kelpfield lifted her to the saddle after she had shaken hands with his sister, and given her a hundred charges not to be late, and just to bring her night-things with her, for there was always plenty of room at Fernbraes: an invitation which was seconded by the doctor, and, for her sake, extended even to her obnoxious brother.

The doctor rode down the avenue, only looking back to wave his hand to his friend Robina, who still stood looking after him on the spot where he had left her, and whose kind and generous heart rejoiced to see such a worthy scion of his father's house returned at last to do it honour.

"If my friend Marion could have seen the day!" she thought. "But, though that may not

be, her son Malcolm may yet be here to rejoice his worthy uncle's heart."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"The sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced; every other wound we seek to heal, every other affliction to forget, but this wound we consider it a duty to keep open. The love which survives the tomb is one of the noblest attributes of the soul."—ALISON.

MINDFUL of her promises, Miss Robina, accompanied by her brother, made her appearance the next day at Fernbraes an hour before dinner, in time, as the doctor told her, to visit the poor specimen which he had given the world of his taste in improving; "though I could wish," he said, "that the trees which I ordered to be planted around it were sufficiently grown to shelter it from all the ill tongues in the country, which have taken the liberty to call it 'the Laird's Folly.'"

Miss Jamesina, for reasons best known to herself, declined making one of the party, but offered to show Mr. Ross "about the doors," as that would not derange her unusually careful toilet. She had decked her short stout figure in a thin muslin dress, which, having been made several years before, had no superfluous fulness to correspond with the increasing dimensions of the wearer; the body, and sleeves tight to the well-fitted arms, were garnished with narrow black lace in sundry fantastic festoons, and the short waist was surrounded by a scarlet morocco belt, which was fastened by a steel buckle. The dress, shorter behind than in front, just permitted the toes of a pair of yellow boots to be visible beneath it, though behind it had the advantage of displaying the heels and quarters. Her stiff, wiry, dusty black hair was partly curled and partly frizzled into a form which it would be difficult to describe—suffice it to say that the breadth of the head was considerably greater than the length, and that it was bound with a fillet of orange velvet, confined in front by an ancient paste ornament.

It was the first time her uncle had seen her so *recherchée* in her attire, and, though little accustomed to the notice of dress, he could not help being struck by the absurdity of her general appearance, and therefore as well pleased when she declined exhibiting it more fully in the proposed walk.

Kelpfield, to an apple-green coat, added bright buckskins, top-boots, and a scarlet plush waistcoat, which permitted a magnificent brooch to display its unusual dimensions. A gold chain round his neck, from which depended his opera-glass, and an enormous bunch of seals, hooked upon his waistcoat-button, completed what he and Miss Jamesina considered a very gentlemanly appearance, and one which the doctor thought well fitted to escort the yellow boots of the lady of his choice.

Robina, though suitably and reasonably tired herself in dark poplin, was accustomed to the unwonted modes of those whose intermitting fits of personal decoration subjected them to the ridicule of associating articles of different centuries, and saw her friend Jamesina without noticing her ill-assorted ornamental efforts.

Miss Jamesina, unwilling to derange the elegance of her headdress by a bonnet, unfolded a little old blue parasol, which Kelpfield gallantly

carried over her head, as, leaning on his arm, she proceeded to show him the room there was at Fernbraes for the exercise of an elegant taste like his. "If my uncle could only be brought to take example by you, what a place he might make this!"

"Yes," answered Kelpfield, "it has some capabilities. Certainly, anything done in the ornamental way on the face of that hill would be well seen from the high road by the sea. What would you think of an equestrian statue of Fernbraes as a hunter, taking the Deer's Leap, as it is called, from the face of the gray craig. The world of fashion are as fond of having their statues now, as they used to be of having their pictures; and, for my part, I think it is a better thing, because they can be placed in more conspicuous situations, and seen by the whole country."

"Very true, very true indeed, Kelpfield; but a statue would cost so much money, and one would have so little for it if it was to be an old, thin man like my uncle. Besides, I have an interest in saving expense that will not bring anything in again—at his years he cannot live forever."

Jamesina thought it prudent just to give this hint; but, that it might appear to be casual, she continued, "When we go in I'll show ye the house. It's really a shame that he should take the very best room in it for his books—but my great-grandfather had something of the same craze before him."

Meantime the doctor had gained the mosque with Miss Robina, and given her a history of his motives for placing it in that situation. She could enter into the feelings which had actuated him, and the disappointments he had experienced, for her own path in life had been early darkened; and, though time had brought resignation, it had not blotted from her memory the hopes which she once cherished. She felt for the friend with whom she was now talking almost the affection of a sister, and it was returned with an equal portion of brotherly love. Was not James M'Alpin the earliest friend of her beloved brother Kenneth? Was he not also the brother of her own chosen friend Marion, and the uncle of Malcolm, to whom she had transferred his mother's place in her heart; and, in addition to all these claims, had he not the sentiments and the feelings, the generous warmth of heart which Robina was accustomed to think characteristics of a true Highlander?

In her youth she had loved and been beloved, but her Roderick was a younger son, "a poor, single-souled lad," as her friends told her, whose fortune hung upon his sword: such as it was, she would gladly have shared it with him; but her parents were inexorable, and not even the persuasions of the man she loved could induce her rectitude of mind to swerve, and consent to a private union, when his regiment was ordered to Gibraltar, and he was forced to join, and leave her exposed to the attentions of one whose fortune he knew would render him more agreeable to her parents.

"No, Roderick, no," she said, "cease to seek to turn me from my duty; I will never break through what I owe to my father and mother, and bring shame on their old age. I could not look for a blessing, even as your wife, if I gained the name of being a disobedient daughter. No earthly power will ever make me deceive my parents: I dare not be guilty of such a sin:

I could not do it even for you; but of this you may rest assured—if I am not yours, I shall never be another's."

"Then you are mine, Robina; and in token, I put on this ring with my hair until I have the right to give you another."

"And I shall keep it, Roderick, until that day, or it shall go to the grave with me; and, in exchange, I give you mine."

Roderick accepted the offered gift, and called God to witness that it should never quit the hand where she had placed it while life beat in his heart; "and if I fall, Robina, it shall be returned to you, if I have a friend near me at the time."

Roderick departed, and fought with honour to himself and his country; and Robina, foul day and fair, walked to the grotto on the beach which had witnessed their parting. Months passed, and years rolled away, and other and richer suitors came, and her parents pressed her to be reasonable, but she always returned the same answer, "I refused him rather than disobey you, but more I cannot do; if I am not the wife of Roderick, I will never be the wife of another."

At last came the news of a great battle fought and victory won; but the first name in the list of the slain was Captain Roderick M'Kenzie, and poor Robina heard no more. That night she was saved from the misery of beholding the illuminations which the great victory had caused. When the first shock had passed, her grief became calm, for it was deep; and though it was neither indolent nor absorbing, it was lasting. Hers was not the headstrong violence of passion, which overleaps all obstacles for its own gratification, but the steady and true love, which can live in distance and absence, and even can survive death. She had loved him for his own sake, because he realized all that ever she had imagined of amiable or excellent in human character—Roderick M'Kenzie and Robina Ross had grown up together—he was the first and only object of her young heart's affection; and in the purity and loyalty of that affection, the idea of transferring the place he held in her heart to another seemed to her as sacrilegious as forsaking the religion in which she was born.

"I will never cut off my first faith," she replied to her mother, when she pressed her to marry another. "I will never bind myself to duties which I cannot perform, and make it a sin for myself to think of him who only thought of me."

"But to see you provided for—to see you settled, my dear Robina, before I quit this world, would make my flitting easy."

"No, mother, no—never let us look that good should come by evil means—I cannot take the Lord to witness a lie; and come what may, I know that he will never forsake us if we do not leave him. It is more sweet to me to be at liberty to think of my own Roderick (which I dared not do if I plighted my troth to another), than to gain all the honours and riches that a perjured oath could bring me."

Robina had not been bred in the school of selfish egotism, which considers all affections as injurious which do not advance worldly prosperity; and her mother, though she earnestly wished to see her placed above a brother's caprice, on whom, in case of her father's death, she must become dependant, like the generality

of unmarried women in her country, was still too much of a Highlander not to feel a sort of triumph, even while it defeated her wishes, in the resolution of her daughter.

Bred in solitude with the object of her early choice, and accustomed with him to wander among the simple and grand features of nature, Robina's feelings acquired strength and depth; they had not been divided and fritted away among a multitude of exciting causes, and were therefore concentrated in a few dear objects. Nature she looked upon with the eye of a mountaineer, instinctively alive to the grand and sublime—with a deep feeling of boundless delight, which carries the mind forward to contemplate truth and beauty at the footstool of the Eternal. The wild and plaintive airs of her native land were familiar to her ear; the sentiments of constancy and tenderness which these songs contained, familiar to her heart as the legends of superstition to her imagination.

When the campaign was ended and peace proclaimed, a friend of poor Roderick's returned, and, according to promise, restored to Robina the ring which contained her hair, and which, by his own desire, had been taken from the hand of her lover when his gallant spirit had ceased to beat. "He breathed his last in my arms," said his friend, as he discharged his commission; "and a truer heart or a braver man never left Scotland (which is saying not a little)."

It was not surprising, then, that in such circumstances she maintained her unchanged resolution, and that, when years had, one after another, taken away the remaining objects of her earthly attachment, she should bestow upon the young Malcolm Sinclair the love which she had felt for his mother, or that, by the freemasonry which attracts similar minds, she should feel an interest in his uncle which the length of their acquaintance did not warrant; for, at the time of her first intimacy with his sister, he was absent, pursuing his professional studies, and when he did return to the country before his departure, she was gone on a visit to other relatives; but, independently of personal acquaintance, there were ties enough to unite them, and, as the true steel, as soon as it strikes upon the flint, elicits the spark, characters of truth and sensibility respond to each other.

"I can believe, doctor," she said, "that you must have felt more sorrow than joy in returning here; what can make one spot of earth dearer to us than another but those who enjoyed it with us? and when we find that they are gone, and their places filled with creatures of another mould, the whole scene becomes hateful. What can be more painful than to find a family likeness in the features of a relative we have loved and lost, and, at the same time, to observe that those features express feelings that are widely different? Oh! it convinces us that the outward show and form may remain, but that the heart, the spirit, the soul, which was our life and our sun, has left us in night. But when my Malcolm returns, doctor, you will at last have one of your family like those who are gone."

"Would that the day were come!" answered the doctor; "but his profession is hazardous, and his return uncertain, like all our hopes in this land of pilgrimage. But can you tell me, Miss Robina, what has become of my old nurse, Madge M'Lean, that I do not find her here? Some mystery hangs over that. Duncan, though naturally open as the day, is averse to speak of

the reason of her disappearance; and I have not been able to get more satisfaction from him than that, some years ago, she went to see an old widow sister in a distant part of the country, and never came back; nor did her sister ever see her, I think, though what happened to interrupt the meeting no one knows. However, I see plainly that there is more in it than any one chooses to tell me."

"At the time old Madge went away," replied Robina, "I happened to be from home; but after your grandfather's and sister's death, I do not think that she found the place just what it used to be, and that, I fancy, made her, as her son says, go to see her sister. She had to cross two or three arms of the sea, and perhaps the boat was lost."

"That is not unlikely; but still," said the doctor, "I cannot find a satisfactory reason why Duncan says so little about it. I have spoken to Jamesina, but she says she was with her sister at Long Byars when Madge left this place."

This conversation was interrupted by the announcement of dinner.

"Cussim Ali has exceeded himself in this curry," said Dr. M'Alpin; let me send you the dish, Mr. Ross; it is a good thing in itself, and an excellent relish for London Particular. We are inconsistent creatures, Miss Robina; many a time, at Lucknow, I have wished for salmon and deer ham; now I am in the midst of them, I even take to the curry again."

"Those who have stayed too long away, doctor, must not expect to find the tastes of their youth just where they left them. I can well believe that living in foreign lands makes all things seem different—and yet we do not need to travel to find changes. Everything here has changed under my eyes as well as yours, though I have stayed in the same spot; or, as the Vicar of Wakefield says of all his migrations being from the blue bed to the brown, mine have been from this county to the next, while yours have been to the ends of the earth; and yet I have lost as many dear to me as you have done, without, perhaps, having made as many to replace them; and I have seen old families decay, and upstarts come in their place." The good lady used an expression which in Scotland is too generally applied to all new-comers, whatever may be their merit. "I have seen others laid in the kirkyard; I have seen old houses new faced, and old trees rooted out; and, goodness be about us! no farther gone than this morning, I heard a project to take down an old family burying-ground to build a new hen-house."

"That would be worse than the barbarism of the Goths and Vandals!" returned the doctor, unconscious that it had reference to the *beaux dessein*s of any one present; "it is too much for the ignorance and egotism of even our modern improvers."

Robina felt the mistake she had been guilty of in drawing out such an opinion in her brother's hearing; and Jamesina, fearful that in her presence Kelpfield would feel himself called upon to defend his taste, hastened to observe to him, in an under tone, while her uncle and Miss Ross were talking together, "You see that things here are exactly as I told you; do not blame me if there is not much done at Fernbraes. He has not the least feeling of how things should be; but there is no use speaking to him about it, for he is too old to learn. Nature or education have not done for him what they have done for you,

Kelpfield; but a time *may* come," she spoke lower, "when those who can profit by your lessons may have more power here, and, in the mean while, it is wise to keep a calm sigh!"

Kelpfield was of her opinion; the probability of her being her uncle's heiress had still greater weight in his eyes than the acquiescing spirit and charming taste which approved of all his projects, realized or in vision. One of them now was actually to ascertain what ground there was for such an expectation, before he committed himself by making a proposal, when he neither dreaded delay or cruelty, and he therefore suppressed his feelings of mortified vanity upon the doctor's blunt declaration, in conformity with his intention to take the first opportunity of sounding Fernbraes upon such an important subject.

After dinner, when the ladies had retired, Kelpfield, in pursuance of his design, observed, "I had no idea, until I saw it to-day, that this was such a fine place. Why do you not marry, Fernbraes, and provide an heir in the right line?"

"I might ask you the same question," answered the doctor; "but, whether I marry or not, Fernbraes will not want an heir."

"Your sister's family, you mean—but that is the female line—Hugh Sinclair has a good prospect."

"Who spoke of him?" asked the doctor, with an accent which made it quite clear that he would never be the chosen. "But what needs," he added, smiling, without the least suspicion of the motive which prompted the observation, "turn a man's thoughts to his heirs, when he has but just come to his inheritance?"

"It is a duty," said Kelpfield, with an air of importance, "that those in your situation and mine, representatives of ancient families, should think of those who are to succeed them—they owe it to their country."

"Never fear; we are not such rare patriots but we may have as good successors: my conscience is clear on that score."

"Then you have done more than I have, if you have already settled that matter," answered Kelpfield, still hoping to bring him to the desired point.

"Certainly, a man who has free property and a choice of heirs, would be mad to leave it to be made over by chance to the heir-at-law."

"Very right, very right," observed Kelpfield.

"Those of whose regard we have experience—those who consult our interest and our pleasure in everything, have a right to be preferred—and they shall be preferred," said the doctor, thinking of his Malcolm.

"Very proper, indeed," responded Kelpfield, thinking of Jamesina, to whom, during the rest of the evening, he paid such flattering attention, that no doubt remained in her mind of the full success of all her manoeuvres, or in her uncle's of his thus comfortably getting rid of one who could never be an agreeable member of his family.

"If Kelpfield would but take her," he thought, "and Malcolm return, I shall yet see good days under my own roof."

CHAPTER XXV.

"Il faut, je le vois bien,
 Être homme de parti, chez vous, ou n'être rien ;
 Mais ma neutralité me rendit leur victime :
 De l'un à l'autre bord chacun m'en fit un crime,
 Tira sur moi ; n'importe !"

BERT ET LEROY.

THE party at Fernbraes had finished breakfast, and Kelpfield, assiduous in the prosecution of his intention, had fixed a day for the return of the visit, when a travelling postchaise drove up to the door, and Dr. McAlpin had the pleasure to find it contained an old Indian friend, Mrs. Seaton: the meeting was pleasant to both parties.

"You will be surprised to see me here, my good friend," she said, as he gave her his hand so alight; "I heard at the next town that you were within a few miles of me, and could not think of passing your door."

"Yes, Mrs. Seaton, a good deal surprised, but more pleased. I did not even know that you were in Scotland."

"Oh, I have been for some time trying to find a resting-place to suit me without much success. You are, however, more fortunate."

"After you have spent a few days among us," answered Dr. McAlpin, "which I hope you will do, you shall judge for yourself."

"Willingly, my dear doctor; I shall be glad to see if your world in the country is the same as ours in town."

"Are you alone—quite alone?" he asked.

"Yes—only my maid with me. I am on my way to visit an old grandmother in the north."

The doctor presented Kelpfield and Miss Ross to his new guest, and easily persuaded them to relinquish their intention of returning home on that day, on condition, however, that Mrs. Seaton would accompany them on the next to Kelpfield.

"If I am to judge by what you have said, Mrs. Seaton," said the doctor, "you have not yet fixed your headquarters."

"No, McAlpin, it is not an easy matter, one meets with so many things to discourage and vex one—though I was warned, in some part, of what I had to expect before I tried. My natural temper is averse to the mystery, concealment, and pretensions which are called very respectable, and I often, without thinking of it, just say the truth, and tell people that I cannot afford to do such and such things, instead of assigning a thousand reasons of choice which have no existence whatever. I hate, you know, the whole of that system of telling needless falsehoods, which, after you have incurred the sin and the shame of them, do not deceive a single creature; and perhaps, too, I may have fallen into the mistake of thinking that my friends who knew me should value me a little, independently of my income; but that is a mistake I would warn every one to avoid. Whatever you are, whatever you do, never depend upon consideration in their eyes, unless you make a figure in that of others."

"You know, doctor," she continued, "that in our part of the globe we do not attempt to impose upon the world, or raise ourselves by the little ostentatious contrivances which I find here to be the machinery of life; but it is all wheel within wheel; and I can assure you, that a person whose life has been passed at a distance makes but sad, bungling work of it. My friends—that is to say, my relations—are 'very genteel,'

though some of them, being younger branches of good families, are not very rich, consequently have the utmost dread and abhorrence of contact with limited means, or anything which looks like it, and acknowledge no relatives who do not live in such and such houses, in such and such parts of the town. When I arrived, in my ignorance, I wished to take a small house suitable to my income—you know I have no one to live for but myself, and by so doing, hoped to be able to see my friends at dinner as usual—but I was told, 'If you take that sort of house, nobody will go near you—nobody ever goes to that end of the town—nobody lives there; fix yourself with the rest of the world, if you would not live *en hermite*.' I was forced to consent, notwithstanding the disadvantage of a northerly exposure.

"After inquiring into the rents, and finding them beyond what I intended to give, I wished to content myself with a flat (or floor, as it is called in England), as sufficiently large for my accommodation: here again I was opposed—"Flats were exclusively the habitations of old annuitants, and there were none of my friends who would like to be seen coming out of a '*common stair*,' to avoid which odium I was forced into a '*self-contained house*,' much larger than a single person required, and demanding more servants than I had intended. I was consoled, however, with the assurance that this establishment would 'place me quite in another situation.' In furnishing, I had the same difficulties again to go over—"everybody's rooms are on the same plan—the couches of the same form and in the same places—in short, there is a certain sort of arrangement, which no one can do without, and there are proper people to whom every one applies"—so I had all these things to submit to.

"Installed in my house, I found that my income was not quite so large as my accommodation, though still sufficient to give me the comforts of life on my sober plan, and, as I imagined, the pleasure of friendly intercourse: no such thing; when I proposed to ask six friends to dinner, I was told "that at that season of the year such a thing was never heard of; nobody that had any other engagement would come to see me in that way. If I expected to see my friends, I must fix on a day at a reasonable distance, and ask a party to meet them."

"In order to put me into the way of doing things properly, I commenced by accepting some of the invitations sent, and dined at the houses of people whose fortune I knew was not much beyond my own, in the style I should have found among persons possessed of six times their income. This was a mystery to me; but when the matter was explained, I found it included so much trouble and management, that I was frightened, and resolved to try the evening parties.

"You will find that much more economical," said my adviser, "than your plan of giving dinners; give one large party, and go over them all at once; afterward you can accept every invitation, and have no expense but your chair-hire."

"But what am I to do for society?" inquired I. I had no sooner asked the question than I felt how useless it was. 'Society' answered my cousin; 'I do not know what you mean by society—I was never in want of society—one meets society everywhere.' I felt at that moment the difference between my cousin and myself; she was firmly rooted in her native soil, and made

"an integral part of her own society; I, like a loose weed, floated on its surface, unconnected with all around me; their feelings, their views, their interests, or even their recollections, had nothing in common with mine."

"There it is," answered the doctor; "when we have advanced a certain distance in our journey through life, so much of our enjoyment lies in memory, that we find our intercourse barren with those who can take no part with us in by-gone recollections."

"We return strangers," said Mrs. Seaton, "to those of our own house, even if they exist, but more frequently among those who are grown up since our departure; we have new characters and new places to make for ourselves, and that, too, often under the unfavourable circumstances of broken spirits and wasted health, which are two things your friends never make allowance for, and which only gain you the credit of being a low-spirited, helpless creature, and the very conviction that it is so increases the evil. You cannot have felt that, M^rAlpin, in the way I have done, however every one experiences it sufficiently to make him recognise the truth of the assertion."

"Certainly, Mrs. Seaton, more or less it applies to us all; we have been long expatriated, our place in the web of human society has been filled up, and we, like a part of the woof left out by the weavers, cannot be easily interwoven again; habits of kindly intercourse have been broken, and, low as the idea may seem, habits of the kind are not easily replaced; and if we are devoid of the striking advantages which are at first sight recognised by all the world, we are left to struggle for ourselves; we see the world with our eyes open, and possibly the unimpaired and bright recollections of youth deepen the contrast."

"You have not yet tried a town, doctor; when you do, you will find the difficulty of choosing the society you like; all run in parties, who have a thorough aversion and contempt for each other, and your acquaintance with such and such people will invariably exclude you from intimacy with such and such others, who may be to you equally desirable. If you seek instruction as well as amusement, nothing is more hopeless than the society of the generality of literary men, who, by a species of usury, are often intent on putting their talents and their observations out to interest, and who will rarely, unless you have a name in the world, waste a good remark upon you. The votaries of art take the same liberty to consider the 'nameless;' and the swinish multitude of one cast, and every different sectarian, considers those of different profession as heretic and reprobate."

"Another difficulty is our ignorance of the nice and exact management by which contrary connexions are kept up: the mysteries of those who are asked, when the door is shut to others, to take a cup of tea—of those who are asked to a 'family dinner' when no stranger is present—those who make unseen visits in private apartments out of visiting hours—the poor and odd members, who are asked on stated occasions of family reunion, 'because you know they are people that one cannot bring among strangers; but when it is only ourselves, everybody knows them'—the honoured guests, who are produced on occasions of parade, when the whole house and establishment is new modelled to receive them. You know that every family have certain relatives who are always inquired for by all

your friends very particularly in company. The lady of the house makes it a point to ask you when you heard from your sister, Lady J.—your brother, the admiral—your nephew, the judge—and your niece, Mrs. Lofty, of Castle Air; and, if you should be very intimate, she takes an opportunity, when nobody is within hearing, to ask, in a whisper, how poor Robert or Nathaniel is; for in almost all families there is some *ne'er-do-well* who has not advanced his fortune sufficiently to entitle him to have his existence inquired after in the hearing of all the world.

"Now this is the history of my own grievances; but I can give you those of my friend Mrs. Beaumont, which are quite of a different cast. You remember her, a Calcutta beauty, holding crowded levees, and being continually surrounded by troops of friends and humble servants; well, she and her husband came home, purchased a splendid house in your capital, and expected to walk in their old path—but Mrs. Beaumont soon found that it would not do. With the exception of a very few, all the men were professional, and had other things to do than to attend levees and make morning visits; and the favoured few were so careased and spoiled, that they were more in the habit of requiring attention than paying it; and her house was filled from morning to night with elderly ladies, whose profession it is to pay visits and show attention to strangers; so she soon wearied of such society, and betook herself to London, though at the risk of being let down into the general mass."

"And what do you mean to do, my good friend?" demanded the doctor, "since your first trial has been so unsuccessful?"

"Visit the members of my family whom I have not yet seen—stay with them if there is anything to like in them, and if not, endeavour among strangers to choose something more to my own taste. If I had children, I should have an interest and an occupation at home which would render me not so independent; as it is, I am not a first object to anybody, and there is no one a first object to me. However much people may talk of independence, there is, believe me, no one who likes the perfect degree of it, which leaves us at liberty to stroll over the world, to come into it or go out of it just as we choose, because no one cares anything at all about the matter."

Mrs. Seaton, according to promise, spent three days at Kelpfield, to the great satisfaction of her host and his friend Miss Robina, who was charmed with the frankness of her character, while Jamesina, on the contrary, thought she had never met with a more disagreeable inmate, and often "wondered" to Kelpfield what her uncle could see in that outspoken woman to like so much; for her part, she liked "douce, sensible ladies much better;" and she *wondered* that any reasonable woman (which, by-the-by, was a title she could not in conscience bestow upon Mrs. Seaton) was not ashamed to be running the world her lieful-lane in quest of what she called society.

"I am quite of your opinion, Miss Sinclair," answered her acquiescent auditor; "and if it were not that it gives us the pleasure of your company at Kelpfield, I cannot say I would have much enjoyment in her visit; for you may see, by her way of talking to Fernbraes about uncultivated nature, that she has no pretensions to taste."

Mr. Ross's anticipations were more than verified: Mrs. Seaton could hardly suppress the ear-

casms which she told the doctor came unbidden to the tip of her tongue when Kelpfield, "in all the pomp of ignorant conceit," showed her what he had done and what he meant to do.

"I admire greatly your consideration," she said, "in putting your Venus on the top of the stove; it is a good place for her in such a climate; and she will sometimes, too, have the loan of the cloaks and coats of those who go out and in through the hall. It looks classic, Miss Sinclair, does it not, to adorn one's house with such figures?"

"More classic than comely," answered Miss Robina; "and as you and I, Mrs. Seaton, are of oldfashioned tastes, I will, if you please, show you what I call my improvements in this place."

"And I will show Miss Sinclair what has been done since she was last here," said her brother, offering his arm to the lady of the yellow boots.

The other three strolled through the shrubbery on the burn side until they crossed a little bridge which brought them to a rustic seat, screened by a mass of rocks and tall trees, commanding a full view of the ancient and romantic burying-ground. Here they sat and spent the time in quiet conversation until dinner was announced. At night Mrs. Seaton and Miss Ross parted with mutual regret, and promises on the part of the former, who was to leave Fernbraes next morning, to return that way when she had paid her proposed visit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Ah! mercy on my soul! What is that?
My old friend's ghost?"

MOLIERE.

"How like a fawning publican he looks!"

SHAKESPEARE.

"Vow, sirs! and is na my mither come hame?" said Duncan M'Lean to old Elspa Corbat, the housekeeper, as his master crossed the lobby, without being observed by the speaker.

"What is that ye say, Duncan?" demanded the doctor, as he caught the intelligence which the housekeeper had opened her mouth to receive. "Did I hear right? Did ye say that your mother was come back?"

"Saving your honour's presence, I said, sure enough, that my own old mither is come to light this very blessed morning."

"Where has she been, Duncan? What has keepit her so long awa?" earnestly asked Elspa.

"I canna say—I dinna ken; she wadna answer me that question, but she said after she had seen the laird she wad tell us a' about it."

"It's a queer thing, and an unco' though, that she should be spirited awa in a whilk, as one may say, and at the end of seven years return in the same way, without mortal's kenning how she went or how she came," said the old woman.

"Where is she? Why is she not here?" inquired Fernbraes.

"She is at my good brother's, Kenny M'Cra, at the Red Sheugh; he brought her hame in his boat, and she is now no able to walk as she used to do, so that she was fain to go till her bed, there to rest her after all that she has come through before that she could see our maister."

"Order them to saddle my horse, Duncan. I'll see her before another hour has gone by, and know the meaning of all this."

"That's like yoursel, Fernbraes," said old

Elspa, as she stood looking after her master. "When was it ever said that a M'Alpin forgot a follower or slighted a friend? If there is no glamour in this, there is, perhaps, something that will please some people just as little to be spoken about. I mind well that a' thing was na just as it should have been after the auld laird's death here; and it was after the lady's burial at Stoneyards that they said there were awesome things seen and heard there, though I did na think so much of it at that time as I have done sin' syne that auld Madge was missing. There were them there that didna hesitate to say that she was in compact with him that shouldna be named; but a' that will come to light noo, and perhaps more too—but is that you, Miss Jamesy? ye come so softly ahint a body, that it is enough to gar a body start—at such a time, too."

"If it was in the dark or the twilight, ye might say so, Elspa; but at this hour in the morning, it is surely no a time to jump as if ye had seen a ghaist."

"I dinna ken, Miss Jamesy, whether the creature that is come is in the body or out of it—did ye hear that auld Madge M'Lean is come back, or else her wraith?"

"Old Madge M'Lean, did ye say! Have ye seen her—have ye spoken with her?"

"No; but Fernbraes has just gone to the Red Sheugh, where she is at this present."

"Well, well," said Jamesina, dismissing the appearance of interest which the first intelligence seemed to produce, "I am glad to hear that she is in the land of the living, for it will please my uncle; but it was of another thing that I came here to speak with you. I want you to send the herd over the hill to Stoneyards for the turkey-pouts that Barbara has brought up for us; give him a big basket to take them in, and I'll give him a bit of a note to Barbara or my father, for I think that this is the day that she was going to Long Byars."

The housekeeper went to the servants' hall, where the herd was eating his porridge, and warned him to be in readiness for the proposed embassy, which she joined in her own mind with the news of the morning, while Jamesina retired to her own apartment to pen the following note:

"Dear Father,

"As Barbara is going, if I remember right, to Long Byars, I write to you for the eleven young turkey-pouts she reared for us here, and which you will know by a rag of scarlet round their feet—please tie their feet before their travel, that they may not do mischief the one to the other. There is nothing Fernbraes likes better than a white, fat turkey-pout, if it be a well-fed bird for the spit. We have no grouse in the house; if ye are provided, it will be as well to send us some; for my uncle, who is gone out to the Red Sheugh to see his old nurse, Madge M'Lean, who, they tell me, is come back this morning, will, I warrant, bring back a good appetite with him, and, I fancy, the old creature before night.

"Dear father, I remain

"Your loving and dutiful daughter,

"JAMESINA SINCLAIR."

The Highland pony, the big basket, and the herd were despatched forthwith, with particular injunctions to make no delay by the road, and to give the note into Stoneyards' own hands,

that there might be no mistake about the turkeys.

"If Stoneyards is on the hill, as is his ordinar," said the boy, willing to show his capability for such a trust, "I shall give your letter to the young laird, who can read all the same."

"Ye will do no such thing, ye conceited widdy-fu; ye'll just seek out my father, wherever he is, and give it into his own hands—and dinna forget the grouse, do ye hear? Fernbraes will hae a fine appetite, Elspa, when he comes back frae the sea."

With a thousand injunctions to go by the letter of his instructions, the herdboy was dismissed.

Elspa hastened to spread the marvellous news she had just heard, and to hear what everybody would say about it. Jamesina retreated to the poultry-yard, her usual place of meditation, to consider what effect this unlooked-for arrival was likely to produce, and what line of conduct was best for her to pursue. She soon settled it all to her own satisfaction, for she recollected with pleasure that her conduct had been so circumspect as not to compromise her with others, even if there were disagreeable discoveries to be made; but she counted much upon old Madge's fidelity to her mother's family, and affection for the child she had nursed, which she was persuaded would make her suffer all in quiet, and make her forego the wish of vengeance, even if she had met with wrong, rather than wound him by bringing blame on those connected with him.

And Jamesina was right in her conjecture; for when the old woman sat up in her bed to see Fernbraes, whom her son rode on to tell her was coming, and when she took her dear bairn, as she called him, in her arms, and solemnly blessed him, and returned thanks that she had lived to see the day when he was come back to lay her old head in the grave, she resisted his wish to know what had caused her absence and her extraordinary silence.

"I am too happy this blessed day," she said, "to speak of suffering, when I should give my whole heart in gratitude to Him who has given me to see the desire of my heart, and to hear a voice that I thought would never again have sounded in my ears on this side of time. Let me see you, my bairn—let me see the features I have so often looked upon, and that I see now with pleasure as I ever did—though, wae's me, they are sair changed."

"And you are changed too, my poor Madge, since those days; but tell me what made you leave the country, and I will not ask you another question till you are well enough and strong enough, which you soon will be at Fernbraes, under Elspa Corbat's and your son's care—what took you away?"

"Just to try to better my fortune after your dear sister's death."

"But was not what I sent for you every year enough?"

"His name be praised!" exclaimed the old woman; "I am more happy at this moment that ye didna forget me, than if I had a' the wealth of the Indies, though with my dying breath I could make oath that I never heard ye had sent aught to me till this moment."

"I must see to this," said the doctor, in rising wrath. "And ye were in want, Madge," he said, kindly, "and ye thought that the child ye had nursed had forgotten you in his prosperity?"

"No, no, Fernbraes, I kenned you better; I am here sitting that never evened ye to an ill thought, far less an ill deed; and, whatever may have been my trials—and I have had my share—I always said to Duncan, and Duncan to me, 'If my own dear bairn was here, it's no him that wad see this.'" But, seeing that he knit his brows, she went on: "Ye mauna think that any one has ill used me; I canna complain, only ye ken old age and infirmities will come."

"I'll know the bottom of this, Madge, before I sleep; in the mean time, try and rest and refresh yourself, that you may be able to come to Fernbraes in the afternoon. I'll send for you as soon as I get home; so be ready, and we'll try if we cannot make up for all that is come and gone."

The doctor, fully convinced that there was some iniquitous mystery concerning old Madge, turned his horse's head across the hill to Stoneyards, as the readiest way of solving what had hitherto baffled all his attempts. He knew that it would be useless to question the prudent Jamesina, of whose tact at keeping things quiet, and putting a smooth face upon them, he was fully aware. He knew she was one who could rub down and plaster up as occasion required; consequently, that she was not a person whose sedulously-arranged statements were at all times in exact conformity with the real state of things. Wary as she was, she thought there was no use in making others acquainted with the true state of any matter unless their assistance was required, and even then not farther than was absolutely indispensable.

Of her father, then, he was resolved to demand an account, which he now thought he had delayed too long, from the aversion he had for disagreeable altercation, and the fear that, if he commenced inquiries with his brother-in-law, he should find but too many subjects.

As he drew near Stoneyards, everything had an appearance of neglect and decay; the stone dikes were in many places broken down, and these "slaps" were filled up with cut "whins" to keep out the sheep, who left notes of their wanderings, in the form of tufts of wool, on the stunted and barked trees which straggled irregularly on both sides of the cartroad that led to the house. The present proprietor had always been too much engrossed in making money to think of comfort or decency, or, in short, anything except what he always called "the main object."

The house was what is called in the north of Scotland "a single house;" that is to say, having but one room in depth, with "thorough lights;" to the centre were joined "back jams" or wings, forming part of an irregular figure, which took in the farm buildings. The house was "harled," and, consequently, at some former period had been white; now it was as black as winter snows and summer rains could make it, and the slates, originally gray, had changed their hue to yellow, from the moss and lichen with which they were covered.

Dr. M'Alpin entered through a gate standing most hospitably open, over which were carved the initials of the builders and the date of the erection, which went back to 1690. On each side of the gate were two long flat stones, on which beggars used to sit until they were served, and which also were in requisition as "louping-on stanes" for those who were not sufficiently *au fait* in equestrian exercises to dispense with such assistance.

Through this gate he crossed the stone-paved court, overgrown with grass and long nettles—the house-door, by a mistake not uncommon in a country where such entrances should be guarded against more than in any other, opened to the east, and, to remedy the blunder, it was garnished with a stone porch, having a more kindly entrance to the south; but, though it was possible to turn the door, it was impossible to alter the house, the front of which stood in deep, sunless obscurity. When the doctor presented himself (having first tied his horse to the outer gate, as there was no living creature to hold him), he walked straight forward through the open house-door into the open parlour—knocker or bell he found none—until he reached the chimney, and twitched the cord there depending with such force as quickly “brought ben” a fat, bareheaded, barefooted Highland lass, in a blue worsted gown, and blue and white striped worsted apron, to ask, without waiting for an order,

“Is it my maister that ye are seeking, sir?”

“Yes, I want your master; tell him that I am here.”

“Wadna it be better, sir, if ye please, just to go tell him? It’s no that far awa—he is only o’er the croft.”

“Ye are right,” answered the doctor, whose impatience was willing to take the shortest way; “but where is the croft?”

“Will I show ye, sir?” she answered, running up through a narrow, dark passage, and opening another door at the end of it, facing the porch, and contrived as if it was necessary to ensure the draught of air always in circulation.

“Take care of your feet, sir,” said the barefooted maiden, splashing onward without looking behind, and disturbing a flock of ducks and ducklings, who were gobbling and swimming in the receptacle for potato-skins and vegetable-water which constant use had hollowed at the back door. “Just step on the straw from the stable—that will no wat ye, sir. Whish! whish! whish!” and she spread her apron to chase the ducklings out of her path. “Ye’ll come through the barn, sir—that’s the shorter road, and drier too, for there’s aye a loch at the end of our byre.”

She entered at the one door of the said barn and emerged at the other while she was speaking, the doctor following as fast as the unstable nature of his footing would permit.

“And now ye’ll cross the moor, and gang up the how, and in the lang craft at the head of it ye’ll be sure to find Stoneyards, with the butcher that came this very morning frae the borough town to buy sheep—ye canna miss the road;” so saying, she dropped her best courtesy, wished his honour good-day, and returned by the way she came, again scaring her webbed family as she reached the precincts of her own dominion.

The doctor, as soon as he found himself on firm footing, turned round to look at the house and its dependencies, which was not, strictly speaking, the property of the present occupant, though he held it for a sum so very small that it could be scarcely called a rent, upon one of the liberal and comprehensive leases, which were in olden time granted by those who regarded the number of their vassals more than their rents, “as long as wood grows and water runs.” Feudal superiority was thus preserved; and as it was customary in that country to bestow titles on more slender pretensions, Mr. Sinclair’s right to be called “Stoneyards” was never disputed.

And while Fernbraes was gazing upon the

wrong side of this dwelling, with all its appendages of ducks and dubs, its owner saved him the trouble of a longer walk, and ascended the how from the long croft in earnest conversation with the butcher.

“Ye’ll no find better or fatter in the hale country, John,” were the first words that reached the doctor’s ear.

“That may be, that may be, Stoneyards; but ye hae been o’er hard upon me; they are too dear; I’ll never make my own of them.”

“Hoot awa! never tell me the like o’ that. I’ll see that’s no true when ye come back to the long croft for the other twa score that ye had better tak noo, before the south-country drover gets them; but, Fernbraes, is that you? Good-day, John—Here ye find me aye doing something—aye looking after the siller.”

“And I am come to look after mine,” said the doctor, “and to know what has become of the twenty pounds I have remitted every year since my grandfather’s death on behalf of my old nurse, Madge M’Lean.”

Stoneyards’ countenance underwent a change, which put to flight the good-humour his successful bargain with the butcher had left there, and he answered in a disobliging tone, “I have more to do than to tak note of such things. Your letters, ye ken, were always to my wife. I know nothing of the matter.”

The doctor stood quietly listening to this speech, and looking full in the face of the speaker; a sort of attention which seemed extremely irksome to the object of it, who turned half round, as if nothing more was to be said on the subject. “Some of my letters were addressed to you—” he had almost said unfortunate, but he checked himself and went on, “wife, but it is not her signature I find in my banker’s account for the receipt of these half-yearly sums when they were drawn out of his hands—answer me that.”

“Hoot awa! I ken something about it noo that ye speak o’ that,” he answered, with undaunted effrontery.

“And perhaps you’ll mind what you did with the money, too,” said the doctor, in a tone of sovereign contempt, “since the poor creature never got it.”

“And who told ye that?” demanded the other, quickly.

“Herself—not an hour past.”

“It’s true that I kened auld Madge M’Lean too well,” resumed Stoneyards, “to gie her the keeping of so much siller; but I did better; for your sister herself bought everything she could want, and gied it to her.”

“Ye do well,” answered the doctor, sternly, “to put my sister in between you and me at this moment, and for her sake I will refrain my just wrath, and not tell you what I think of breaking trust and defrauding the poor; but I will tell you this, and you may make what use of it you like—if it were not out of respect to her memory, these would be the last words that I would exchange with you; as it is, I will see you as *her* husband and the father of *her* children, but nothing more; so now you know my mind, and may act accordingly.”

“Hoot awa! hoot awa!” said Stoneyards, quite mistaking the cause of his brother-in-law’s forbearance, “what need ye mak such a rumpus about a wee bit slip of the memory, and tak an auld fule wife’s word before mine? I tell you, your sister wha is dead and gone gave her eve-

rything she wanted, and more than she deserved, though maybe she has told you another tale."

The doctor's usually pale colour flushed to crimson as he looked with scorn upon the speaker: "Is it indeed a countryman of my own that I see and hear? Could any Bengallee do more? I can hardly believe the evidence of my own senses—but he is beneath my notice."

The doctor walked on while Stoneyards raised his voice to call after him, "Will ye no walk in, Fernbraes, and tak a glass of something after your ride. I wish I had known that ye were coming, and I wad hae been in the way to meet you, without the trouble of your coming out here to seek me;" but, receiving no answer, he muttered to himself, "Oh! oh! my gentleman has taen the black dog on his back, but the only way is no to see it. A wilful man maun hae his way—he'll come out the doots the way he went in—it winna do to quarrel wi' our bread and butter: I must just gie him time to come to himself before we meet, though I thought I had taken care of that auld witch, and that she should na, ha come back here to travail us. He is such a fool with lavishing his money, that if some of it did not come this way, it wad na be worth while looking after him, or being plagued with his tantrums; but we must try and put this strum out of his noddle, though how it is to be done at this moment I dinna well see; but he'll just rin the length of his tether, and when he is weary he'll just come back again. His sister can still help me in that."

While Stoneyards was soliloquizing, Fernbraes was walking down to the outer gate at a quicker pace than he had used for many a year; and when he came there, untied his fasting steed from the rail to which he had fastened him, mounted, and set forth at a brisk trot, impatient to quit a place filled with such painful suggestions. What must his poor sister have suffered with such a man? The sight of him and his family explained many things in her letters, or rather omissions, which were before unintelligible.

When he reached his own house, he overtook Jamesina in the avenue, returning from the gate to which she had convoyed Kelpfield, who had that morning paid her a long visit, with which, it was evident, she was greatly delighted.

"What a pity that you did not come home sooner, uncle! One has been here waiting for you for the last two hours, until he could wait no longer—though he was grieved to go without seeing you," said Jamesina, looking down with a very demure air, which was, however, lost upon the doctor.

"Another time will do as well, Jamesina, for all he could have to say. I dare say it was Rob Robieson, with something about the quarry or a new lease."

"What are ye thinking of, uncle? It was Kelpfield who was here, and who wanted to see you on very particular business."

"Kelpfield was it? Then it was as well that I was out of the way; he could have little to say that I would care to hear."

"I am very much obliged to you indeed, Fernbraes, for your kindness to me," answered Jamesina, in a voice of pique.

"Kindness to you, Jamesina! What have Kelpfield's visits to me to do with kindness to you? unless, indeed," he said, observing for the first time the droll and flurried expression of the happy maiden, "he was come to make a proposal for you."

"As broken a ship has come to land, uncle, and I don't see why you should think it such an unlikely thing. He is not the first, I trow, that has thought of me."

"Well, well, Jamesina, I am happy to hear it; and if I had known he was here upon such an errand, I would have tried to meet him; but the loss of a day is not the loss of a cause. In the mean time, order a good cartful of straw and blankets to be sent up to the Red Skeugh without delay for poor old Madge, and let them take care that they send a careful, steady man to drive it."

"It is surprising to me, uncle," said Jamesina, quite out of patience with his misplaced anxiety, "that at such a time ye should only think of an old witch like that; but if ye are so much taken up about her, and like to go back that way, I dare say ye will overtake Kelpfield before ye come to the Red Skeugh."

"And ye would have me ride after him, and offer you to him, would ye, Jamesina?" said the doctor, much provoked by the way she had spoken of Madge. "No, no, let him go home in hope, and go you and see that everything is well looked to for the comfort of this ill-used creature."

Jamesina turned from her uncle at the household in obedience, though not very gracious obedience, to his orders. "Duncan!" he called; "send Duncan M'Lean here;" but Duncan was not within hearing, and, on inquiry, it was found that the herdboy who brought the turkeys from Stoneyards in the morning had brought a message for Duncan which made him cross the hill directly to receive the payment of some money that was due to him by a man who was leaving the country. His master was provoked that he should be absent at a time when he was so much wanted, and the day was too far advanced to permit of detaining the cart until he could return from such a distance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Take care my gates be open. Bid all welcome;
All who rejoice with me to-day are friends.
Let each indulge his genius—each be glad,
Jocund, and free, and swell the feast with mirth.
The sprightly bowl shall cheerfully go round;
None shall be grave, or too severely wise;
Losses and disappointments, cares and poverty,
In wine shall be forgotten all." OTWAY.

THE evening had now closed in, the cart had been despatched several hours, and the doctor and Miss Jamesina were sitting on each side of a blazing fire in the drawing-room expecting its return, and both restored to some degree of tranquillity by the instrumentality of the dinner they had just finished. The doctor forgot the provocations of her father in the agreeable prospect of getting so well rid of Jamesina, and: he, in the certainty of her new establishment, lost the fears which had haunted her imagination on the first tidings that a person who was half a witch, if not altogether, was to be a member of the family. Jamesina had her own reasons for not liking to have any one gifted with the faculty of divination under the same roof with her; and, if even old Madge's talents did not extend so far, there were some things in her memory, perhaps, which might be equally inconvenient to have brought to the knowledge of the laird.

While both were enjoying their speculations in their own way, Cussim Ali entered with the letters brought by the Fernbraes postboy from the borough town. "Here's news! here's news indeed!" said the doctor, when he had, as was his custom, looked over his ship-letters first. "Your brother Malcolm writes me that he hopes to be with us in two months from the date of this letter, and, from the time it has been in coming, we may look for him soon now. Send up Mrs. Corbat," he said to Cussim, who still stood behind his master's chair with folded hands. "We will make this a night of rejoicing. Jamesina, are ye not happy to hear that your brother will so soon be here?"

"I would be happy, uncle," said Jamesina, dissembling, in a hypocritical tone of concern, the vexation which almost overpowered her, "if I did not know that he has the seas to cross, and that is enough to keep me sober. Wad it not be better, uncle, not to make any rejoicing until he is safe here? It's like tempting Providence to begin merry-making, and him on the deep sea."

Her uncle, offended with the want of conformity between her sentiments and his own, at the moment turned to give his orders to the housekeeper who had just entered, without even hearing the conclusion of his niece's speech.

"Your young master will be here soon, Elspa," he said.

Jamesina felt sick at the sound, and groaned over the cross fate that had prevented her uncle from seeing Kelpfield before such news was public. "Oh, if he had only seen him, and the proposal had been made, Kelpfield dared not have come back; come what would, he would never have ventured to affront a family like ours; but now"—she groaned louder—"there is no saying what may take place if this unlucky news reaches his ears before he sees my uncle."

"Malcolm McAlpin will be here before a month be passed," continued the doctor, whose indignation at Stoneyards' behaviour seemed to decide him in proclaiming his heir. "Give every one that ye can gather together to-night, Elspa, the best supper that this house will afford, and let them drink to the safe and speedy return of the heir of Fernbraes."

"Bless your honour for the word; and His name be praised who has brought back such a flourishing branch from the old stock."

"Send for the piper, Elspa, and give them a merry night. I will lead off the first dance myself," said the doctor, "with the bonniest lass in the company, and may we soon have a mistress to grace the mansion. What would you think of a mistress, Elspa?"

"I wad think much of any mistress that you or Mr. Malcolm would give me," answered the old housekeeper; "and I hope yet to cook the wedding-dinner before I take my long sleep."

"Do not let us talk of sleep now, Elspa, but up and be doing. Send out the herds, and call in the neighbours round to rejoice with us. It's a pity that Inchbraken is so far, for who should rejoice this night if Robina Ross did not?"

"It is too far! it is impossible that she can come at this hour of the night, uncle," eagerly interrupted Jamesina, in consternation at the idea of her disinterested lover being brought to witness such a fête.

"And why not, Jamesy! The night is fine and clear starlight. If you were to go in the carriage, I am sure she, and, if you like," he said, smiling, "her brother, would come back with you, and Elspa will have their rooms in readiness."

"It is out of all character to pay visits at this hour; and, after what passed to-day, I would not like to do it," said Jamesina, with an air of rigid decorum.

"I was more ready to forget this than you, Jamesy," said her uncle, laughing; "however, women have good memories in some things. He'll surely be back at a good hour to-morrow morning, and then we can engage him to come back to dinner with his sister. A family dinner, you know, Jamesina."

She smiled at the agreeable suggestion, but took the opportunity, at the same time, to observe, "It is like he may come, and it would be as well not to say anything about Malcolm or this letter until he has told you why he wanted to see you to-day—it will be more polite, you know, uncle."

"Certainly, certainly. But what can keep the cart with Madge? No one will rejoice more in this news than she will do. We want company in our happiness. I wish that my friend Cheapstow and his wife were here to-night; they would be happy to see our young sailor."

Jamesina left the room on pretence of forwarding her uncle's wishes, but, in fact, to collect her scattered thoughts, and to consider how she could avert the disclosure which, she had a strong presentiment, would blight her hopes, though vanity made one or two efforts, against her better judgment, to persuade her that her own lovely qualities and good taste were not altogether indifferent to her hero. The prospect of realizing all her wishes, and the chance of their defeat, caused a commotion in the thoughts of our distressed damsel which had nearly driven her out of her wits.

The luxury and improvements at Kelpfield—fowl-houses, Venuses, and all, with the laird in his green coat—floated in succession before her bewildered imagination. To lose them—to lose them all by an old man's perverse absence, just at the time he should have been present, was more than she could bear. She called to mind all the gallant, all the tender things Mr. Murdoch had that very morning addressed to her; but, though they were full of the warmest professions, she could not help recollecting, with a shiver, that there was not a proposal among them. He had made it clear, without committing himself by a formal declaration, that such was the intention with which he intended to wait upon her uncle; but she could not help dreading that the present change of circumstances might make a change in his amiable intentions, and she, for the first time in her life, gave way to a tincture of the romantic almost for ten minutes, in persuading herself that it was the man she regretted, and not his fortune; and she, if ever she had indulged herself in the folly of a confidante, would at that moment have exclaimed against the cruelty and faithlessness of men, who gain hearts, "and leave those hearts to break." "Mrs. Ross, of Kelpfield!" the sound was music in her ears. Then she turned with black despair to the frightful re-

verse: her brother, the acknowledged heir, bringing home a young wife to take precedence of her, a poor, neglected, rejected maiden! And the recreant Murdoch—it was not to be thought of; she would make every effort first.

Peals of laughter, which almost distracted her with the idea that they would be heard at Kelpfield, sounded about the house and within it, as the tenants and neighbours came pouring in. The doctor, who loved old customs, had ordered that a great bonfire (the ancient sign of family rejoicing at Fernbraes) should be lighted on the face of the Deer's Leap, to warn every one within sight of it that their presence would be welcome in the servants' hall.

Jamesina's agony amounted to despair when she saw the bright volleys of flame shoot up from this conspicuous spot, and saw the figures of all the idle boys in the place dancing round it and feeding the fire.

"It will be seen at Kelpfield! It will be seen at Kelpfield, and all is over! Oh! that they were in the midst of it that planned such a folly! it's no enough that there is laughing and gaffing sufficient to be heard round the hale country, and to start the deer from the heather, but, as if that was too little, they hae made a blaze that may be seen at John o'Groat's house. Sorrow take them, that I should say the like! See till that fire! Oh! that the winds would scatter it, or the rain drown it! but no; it only blazes brighter. My blessing on Kelpfield's improvements! at this moment I recollect that in the room where he and Robina sit when they are by themselves, he has built up the window that looked this way to make a niche, and if I could but get in that rabble of idle callants, it would be easy to get out the fire, for there are no many eyes here that will see much before they quit the house this night."

To send a trusty messenger to the hill to entice the joyous fraternity who fed the fire into the muckle barn, where punch and strong beer were set affowing, was the first care of Jamesina, and to smooth her ruffled features the second, as it would not do for her to make her appearance in her present perturbed state before all the sharp eyes in the house. She had a feeling that watchful regards would be bestowed upon her, to see how she took the information and to enjoy her vexation; but here her dissimulation might have done credit to a wider sphere than it had ever been her lot to act in. After the first moment of surprise had passed, it would have been difficult to trace in her falsified tones and smiles any indication of what was passing within.

Jamesina descended to the scene of action, and met her uncle on the stairs coming to seek her.

"It is surprising that poor old Madge is not come yet; who did you send with the cart, Jamesy?" he inquired.

"Jock Glass—and he would be gleg enough to be back if he had an inkling of what is going on."

"And for what did ye send him, who is one of the idlest lads about the place? You should have sent one more to be depended upon."

"But how could I, uncle! Duncan, who is the most proper person, took it into his wise head to go over the hill to Stoneyards the only day

that it mattered two pins' points whether he was in the house or out of it—the grieve, ye ken, was away with two or three of the farm lads with black-cattle to the Dolour market—the house-servants are no fit to guide carts. Your black creature, Cussim Ali, if he were good for anything else in the world but to sleep and to eat, weary on him, wad hae frightened the folk at the Red Skeugh. Ye ken, uncle, that there are some who believe that auld Madge kens more than the rest of the world, and has friends that would no do to be seen in daylight; if yon black face had presented itself among them in the gloaming, there are some, I doubt, who would hae gotten an unco' fright," said Jamesina, laughing at her own invention.

"I wonder, Jamesina, that you can have pleasure in such nonsense. Madge would know little, certainly, if she did not know more than those who can believe such tales; but I wish that she was come, though it is now late; I cannot understand what keeps her. That lad Jock Glass cannot have stopped by the way with any one he may have met on the road!"

"It's like enough—Jock likes a dram and a crack—though, as I said before, he wad hae been here afore noo if he had kenned what was doing; but an hour or two more or less canna make much difference, and she'll be the surest good in your aught, you may depend upon it."

"Stop, Jamesina, stop a moment," said the doctor, listening; "I think I heard a cart upon the road—that will surely be them; but it is not coming to the house, it is going to the square. That's curious, too, at this hour of the night. Jock Glass must have got a cup too much, and forgot that he has got old Madge in the cart."

The doctor rang the bell and desired Duncan, who at the moment presented himself, to go and see why they were taking his old mother to the square. In a few minutes, an unusual commotion among the servants below warned them that something was amiss.

"The poor old creature is not dead, I trust," said the doctor; "something has happened, it is plain."

While he was speaking, Duncan returned to tell his master that the cart had come back empty, without a driver, and that the horse was wet and covered with sand, as if he had been in the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Night, sable goddess! from her ebony throne
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world."

YOUNG

"But hark!

* * * * *
They come with half-lit tapers in their hands,
And snatch'd in startled haste unbelted brands."

BYRON

"I'll wager anything," said Miss Jamesina, who was very much pleased with an incident which she was certain would turn everybody's attention from the bonfire to old Madge, "I'll wager anything ye like, uncle, that Jock Glass went into the 'wisp-house' at the bridge-end with some of the marketfolk, and that the horse strayed down 'on the sand, and now he is come

home when he likes himself. A' the men about this town are so accustomed to eat and to drink, that fnt another thing do they mind."

"But he is as wat and as weary, mem, as if he had travelled mony a mile," said Duncan, who had listened to the lady's exposition; "I wish all may be well with my poor mother."

"If this matter, as we have reason to think, should be as my niece has said," answered his master, "it is likely that Madge is as much surprised why she has not been sent for, as we are why she has not come. It is too late now to think of sending for her to-night; but ye had better step up, Duncan, and tell her what has happened, as she will be, perhaps, ill at ease without hearing from us."

One of the servants from the square now made his appearance with a checked handkerchief in his hand, which he said had been found fastened upon one of the cleeks of the coup.

"It is my mither's napkin," said Duncan; "I know that napkin well; I could swear to that."

"What do you say, Duncan?" interrupted the doctor. "Is it not possible that the poor old woman could have been thrown out of the cart?"

"My heart misgives me," said her son; "and, with your honour's leave; I'll go and see."

"Do that, Duncan—don't lose a moment," and, speaking to the other servants, who came crowding up stairs in the idea that something extraordinary had happened, "Get ready the carriage; I will go myself this instant, and see what is the matter. She is, perhaps, thrown out over some bank—give me blankets in the carriage."

"Ye are no surely, uncle, going to put the like of her into the carriage to soil it!" said Jamesina; "let me send Ronald M'Kenzie with another cart, and plenty of straw in it, or a good caff bed, if ye like—if anything has happened, she will no be in a condition to put into a carriage."

"Out upon you, Jamesina," said her uncle, angrily, "to have such a thought at such a time. Bring the carriage directly, and my horse, and let two or three men with lanterns attend me."

"But, uncle, are ye really going at this time of the night? Ye'll certainly tak cold, for the wind is rising; and ye'll no surely tak all the men, and leave me in the house alone!"

But her uncle heeded not the expostulation, and had gained the foot of the stairs before it was finished. Seeing his contempt, she went on:

"And all this for that useless auld creature! I wish she may have broken her neck, and then all plague would be ended; but it's no to the like of her such turns come to pass. This is, I doubt, but one of her old cantrips—she never had the reputation of being over canny. Hear to the wind how it sounds; there's maybe some one riding it the night—Fernbraes is so camsterie and capernoited when he taks the gee, that he'll no hear reason. A bonny like thing to leave me without a manbody in the house, when it's plain queer things are doing out of it. Oh, Elspa!" she said, to the housekeeper, who came up stairs, "did ye hear that skreigh—what's that, Elspa?"

"It's more than I can tell, Miss Jamesina; I never saw nor heard waur myself, though I fear there's more in this than should be told."

Fernbraes rode straight to the cottage of his

poor old nurse, impatient to ascertain if she had actually left it. Duncan, who had run every step of the road upon the same errand, had arrived a minute before, and from his master learned with sincere sorrow that the poor creature had actually set out.

"And is it possible that she is no arrived at this hour of the night?" inquired Kenny M'Cra's wife. "She left this wi' good daylight, and Jock Glass was as sober as a judge, and said a drop had not passed his craig this blessed day, forbye the glass I gied him at the door; but it's like that, if he gaed awa with some of the marketfolk, our mither, kenning his ways, has just taken refuge with some neighbour, and we'll hear of her in the morning, Duncan, never fear."

There was hope in the supposition, but neither Duncan nor his master were quite satisfied to rest upon it. "Let us, at all events," said the latter, "separate, and make a thorough search along the road, to be certain that no accident has happened before we return."

Poor Duncan willingly acquiesced in the proposal, though he had little expectations from the result. From the moment he had seen the handkerchief, which he knew to be hers, he had his own fears that violence had been used to prevent the return of his mother. This was a surmise, however, he would not even hint to his master without stronger proofs to go upon.

Part of the road from Fernbraes to the Red Skeugh lay along a steep bank overhanging the sea, and the natural conjecture in such circumstances was, that, if Jock Glass had met with convivial friends, and had left the horse to his own guidance, he might, in picking by the roadside, have lost his footing, and fallen over the bank into the water, which would account for his wet appearance at his own stable door. It was near ebb tide, and Fernbraes, with three or four of his people, and such torches as they had been able to muster in their haste, determined to remain below the rocks, and endeavour to ascertain if their conjecture was well founded, while the others should return by the road they came, and examine every suspicious spot on either side.

The doctor proceeded slowly at the head of his troop, who, as well as the doubtful light would permit, scrutinized the sand at the foot of the rocks and below the bank, without discovering any traces of what they sought. It was now the season of low tides, and it was evident, from the appearance of the high-water mark, that the last flow had not reached to within fifty yards of the rocks, so that, if a horse and cart, or any body of considerable weight, had fallen over, it was clear that some traces must have remained. Every cavern and hollow along the shore was explored with no better success, and Fernbraes's hopes were strengthened that Madge M'Cra would prove right in her prediction, though the sandy and wet appearance of the cart and horse bore something against it.

Some of the people who had kept the main road had discovered Jock Glass lying on a bank by the road side, in a state of complete intoxication. After they had, by repeated efforts, roused him in some degree from his stupor, he could give no account of the matter. He recollected nothing after having received Madge into his cart, in conformity with his master's orders,

but his meeting some of the people from the market, who offered him a glass, and his going with them to the bridge-end, while he left his horse to pick on the brae fit.

After long and useless search, Fernbraes was obliged to return home without having gained any farther intelligence. He tried to persuade himself, and to persuade his worthy foster-brother, that, since there was no trace to be found of the old woman, it was probable that she, weary of being left in the cold night air, had taken shelter in some cotter's house in the neighbourhood, and that they should have good accounts of her in the morning.

Duncan had his own reasons for being more uneasy about what had happened than he chose to inform his master, and before daybreak was again on foot, to endeavour to ascertain if his conjectures had any foundation. So few carts passed that road, at least large carts, or coups, as they were called, that with daylight he had no difficulty in tracing the wide wheel-marks from Fernbraes to the cottage of his good brother. From his door he found that he could even trace the wheels of the cart to the wisp-house at the bridge-end, which was but a very little distance beyond the fisherman's cottage; and there, again narrowly inspecting the dust, he fancied he discovered several turns of a cart-wheel, which, with the newly-cropt thistles, seemed as if the horse had strayed at his own pleasure. On following these marks through all their zig-zags, he found a track of wheels on the short turf, as if again returning to the fisher's. He measured the distance between the axle-trees, and found it to correspond exactly with those he had traced from Fernbraes.

Following this clew, which was very distinctly marked on the heath about twenty yards to the left of the main road, it conducted him past the cottage where his mother had been for about a mile along the shore, and then, suddenly crossing the road, descended a sloping sandy bank to the sea. His heart throbbed and the colour mounted to his face as he remarked on the sand a man's footprint of very large dimensions—a circumstance the more appalling, as Jock Glass was barefooted, and these impressions evidently belonged to one wearing shoes. He measured them by his own feet, and found them so much larger that there was only one person in the country to whom they could belong. If that person had guided the horse to such a place, it could not have been for good to his poor mother. The tide was now nearly full, and in the flood he lost all farther traces of both cart and footsteps. Six hours before, when the cart must have been there, it was low water, which accounted for there being no traces of return, and for the sandy and wet appearance of the horse when he came home.

The footsteps—the enormous footsteps of the person who must, from their position, have led the horse—respect for his master's family made honest Duncan shudder as if he had committed a crime in permitting himself to join, in idea, him who owned a shoe of that size with such a subject. Duncan called to mind circumstances which had occurred several years before, on the first disappearance of his mother, and which, in conjunction with the large footsteps, weighed deeply on his mind.

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"It must be," he thought, "that my poor old mother was put into a boat at this place, and taken where I'll maybe never hear of her more, to be out of the way of them that wish her ill, and out of the care of them that wish her well; and what can I do to help her, or how can I come at the truth?"

Duncan's resolution was not to disturb the laird with suspicions, but to leave no stone unturned to discover whether they were ill or well founded; and in this intention he retraced his dreary path by the way he came. Several of the other people had also been out making inquiries in the cottages along the road, but without discovering anything to throw light upon the fate of Madge M'Lean.

When the circumstances of the last night were generally known, the country people crowded to Fernbraes to hear all the particulars, and to add their own observations to the general store. That one person should disappear twice from the same place was a thing unheard of. Some were disposed to attribute it to the compulsion of others, and some very naturally concluded that it was more likely to be a cantrip of the old wife's, who, it was plain, had ways of coming and going which were but known to herself, and therefore it would be but tempting fate to seek more into it.

Of this number was Miss Jamesina, when she gave her opinion out of her uncle's hearing; she was sure, also, that the old body had cast the glamour over Jock Glass, who had slept without moving from the time the rest had brought him home.

But, let the case be what it might, the effect was, that every creature in the country thought and talked of nothing else. Even those whose belief was the strongest in Madge's supernatural powers, contrary to their own opinion of the risk attending such presumptuous curiosity, tried, while the daylight befriended them, to ascertain if traces had been left on earth of the way by which Madge had gone; and, when none such could be found, they were only the more convinced "that to the like of her common ways are not necessary; that she had only to take the shape of any fowl she liked, and flie awa at once. Many a time a queer black corbie had been seen about Kenny M'Cra's chimney before she came home."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Returning, he proclaims by many a grace—
By shrugs, and strange contortions of the face—
How much a dunce that has been sent to roam,
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home."

COWPER.

THE buzz of the events of the eventful night, joyful and sorrowful, found their way to Kelpfield at an early hour in the morning: most fortunately, Mr. Murdoch Ross thought to himself, before he had made the visit which he had spent a considerable time in arranging himself to pay.

"My dear Malcolm will soon be among us," said Miss Robina; "well may his uncle rejoice; and if I wanted anything to make me like him better, it would be this resolution to make Malcolm his heir."

"And who is this Malcolm, that you take such a mighty interest in, Robina?" demanded her brother, thoroughly provoked by such an unlooked-for overturn of his plans. "What is it to you who the old man leaves his wealth to! You are not likely to be the better for it in one way or another."

"I am always the better for hearing of kind and reasonable actions; and who is there but my dear boy Malcolm—whom you never saw, Murdoch, for he was at sea before you came home—to keep up and do credit to the ancient name of M'Alpin? I only wish that we could find a wife fit for him."

"It would be more likely if you thought of seeking for wives for those nearer home," returned her brother.

"Is that the string you are harping upon, Murdoch! If your fancy is set upon it, you can bring my old friend Jamesina Sinclair here: you have enough for both."

"To confess the truth, Robina, I had some thoughts of that—but then I thought that she would be the heiress."

"And what could put such a thought into your head, with three brothers, as she has! Are you a Highlander, and have so little respect for the male line? But that need not make any difference to you; as I said before, you have plenty for both; and though it is not Jamesina Sinclair that I would like to see at the head of our house, I'll never oppose it, brother, if your heart is set upon it."

"Whatever I might have had, I have certainly no thought of Miss Sinclair now: a man does not pass half his life in making a fortune to throw it away in that fashion."

"As you please, Murdoch," answered his sister, laughing, fully convinced in her own mind that Miss Jamesina and Mr. Murdoch were under the influence of very similar feelings: "if there are no hearts to be broken, it little matters; but have you not gone too far to stop!"

"Fortunately, no—certainly, no; my saying I wished to see Fernbraes did not amount to that; though, after some things which did pass"—Mr. Murdoch pulled up his neckcloth, and surveyed himself in the glass—"I would not like going to the house unless this business had given me a good reason; and, before it cools, I shall just ride over. Fernbraes will be so occupied with it that he will not have time for anything else. She certainly *has* as good a taste as any person I have ever met with."

In his ride from Kelpfield to Fernbraes, Mr. Ross had leisure to reflect that it was impossible Dr. M'Alpin could be ignorant of the motive he had yesterday in seeking to meet him; and he farther considered that Fernbraes was not a sort of man to be treated with insult. Vanity whispered that the grief of the deserted damsel would also be very alarming, and that these circumstances, taken together, might make an absence on his part a very prudent measure.

Having settled this to his own satisfaction, and in a way which he hoped would seem natural to the parties concerned, he rode boldly forward, and entered the dining-room at Fernbraes, where he was guided by a multitude of voices talking together upon the topic which engaged all attention.

"This is a sad business, Fernbraes," he said,

after his salutations were over, "this is a very terrible business; and, though I have this morning received a letter which harasses and torments me very much," looking towards Jamesina, who opened her wondering eyes as he spoke, "I could not lose a moment in riding over to know if I can be of any use to you."

"We expected to see you," answered the doctor, in his straightforward way, "before this unfortunate accident took place."

"I cannot tell you how much it has grieved me," returned Mr. Ross, interrupting the speaker, and not giving Jamesina time to utter the words it was evident her lips shaped, "and more particularly as I have received a letter which requires my presence in London without sleeping by the way. I must set off this afternoon."

"This afternoon!" exclaimed Jamesina. "This afternoon, and leave us in such fear and trouble! it is really not kind."

"I am the sufferer from this cruel necessity—but I have not a moment to speak my feelings upon the subject; when I come back you shall know all."

Mr. Ross spoke with such an air of haste that Fernbraes felt convinced that something important had occurred, and kindly wished him a good journey and a speedy return. Jamesina, on the contrary, better aware of some motives which might probably influence him, felt wretched in the almost certain overturn of hopes so near their completion. She had tact enough to perceive that there was studied effort in his manner to her, and, unable longer to endure the doubt, she asked him if, in the hurry of old Madge's story, they had told him that her brother Malcolm was expected; but she had to do with one who could deceive as well as herself, and who for once set her sagacity at default.

"No, my dear Miss Sinclair," he answered, "this is the first I have heard of it; but you may believe I am delighted that you have some counterbalance to this vexatious occurrence, and that you should have a friend near to you when he that would wish to comfort you is forced away."

The last sentence was said in an under voice, and had, for the time, the desired effect of reassuring the heroine, and enabling her to part from her recreant lover with more calmness than she could have done without the implied hope; though he had not been gone a quarter of an hour, and she had time to think over all the occurrences of his visit, before her naturally suspicious temper filled her head with doubts.

"I will find from Robina whether he told me the truth or not when he said that he did not know that my brother was expected!" but here again the doctor's straightforward way disappointed her project, for his first address in meeting Miss Robina, was,

"Your brother, who has just been here, tells us that you have not heard that my nephew, Malcolm M'Alpin, is expected before many weeks go round, and that we were in the midst of celebrating the joyful news, and drinking the young heir's health, when this unlucky affair put a stop to everything."

Robina looked at Jamesina, but did not contradict the statement her brother had made, and Jamesina had now no means of ascertaining its

truth, and was therefore left to the fluctuation of her own hopes and fears.

CHAPTER XXX.

*"La nuit, d'un vol bruyant fendait l'espace sombre,
Eil observe le crime enseveli dans l'ombre."*

DEILLE.

NEXT morning brought new rumours to Fernbraes. One man, as he was returning after midnight from the funeral of a friend, at a distance had seen a very large thing like a human creature, but without head, for a long plaid or mantle, or something of the kind, flowed from the top to the bottom of it. It was going slowly along the road that the cart had passed, and scratching on the sand as it went. At the time there was but a watery glimpse of the moon, and, though he could very well see the shape of it between him and the sea, it was too dark to see the colour of the covering, "if it werena indeed a mort-cloth."

When he saw it turning from one side to another, as if it was moving the sand without arms, his sight began to reel, and he was almost afraid to look longer at it, for fear of seeing it change into something that shouldna be before his eyes. Once, when he got to a good distance from it, he stopped on the top of a rock to look after it at its strange work; but it gave such a dreadful roar, that he took to his heels and ran, without once stopping or looking behind him till he got to his own house; and his wife was almost as "sore frightened" as he was, to see him looking as white as a ghost—a thing that had never before happened to him in his "born days." What it could be passed his comprehension, but he was very sure that it did not belong to this world.

Eppie Tamson had been at the shore before "gray daylight" to gather whilks before the sea came in; she saw marks on the bank, near the Black Rocks, of a cart and horse, but she didna think muckle of that, because she weel kened that folk went that gate often for "seaware" (kelp); but among the rocks what should she light upon but a woman's toy mutch, with a handful o' gray hair sticking in it, and she couldna help wondering how it came there, for she had never heard tell of such a thing syne mad Jenny Ronaldson drowned herself off thae very rocks, twenty years by-gone at the Martinmas; she wad gang hame and bring the toy mutch, for in her hurry she had forgot it, and Duncan could see himself if ever his mother aught it.

Duncan, when he saw the cap in question, which he at once recognised as belonging to his mother, and the hair which stuck to it, as if pulled from the head of the wearer by violence, had no longer a doubt of the fate of his poor parent. "They have drowned the old woman," he said, "in a pool at the foot of the Black Rocks. Oh! that I could find out them that dared to do it! old and poor as she was, she was my mother, and such a deed should not go unpunished, and shall not, if I live."

Duncan, with this new clew, set out again to inspect the Black Rocks, but his scrutiny had as little success as before; the only additional circumstance which he discovered was, that the traces of the large footsteps, and even the cart-

wheels, were gone off the sand, which seemed to have been smoothed by something trailed over it, as a bush of furze, or some similar thing. This corroborated Rory More's account of the creature he had seen the night after his mother was missing.

Earnestly did Duncan wish that it had been his good fortune to meet with that creature; and though he was no more above the belief of supernatural agency than his neighbours, he took a vow that he would know whether the thing was made of flesh and blood or not. The idea which many entertained that his mother had more agents at her command than any good woman ought to have, was an insulting supposition which his honour was bound to disprove. He considered the subject so deeply that a thought struck him which he determined to put into execution, as perhaps it would help him in his search, and lead to a personal rencounter with his enemy.

His idea was to renew the large footsteps on the sand where they had been effaced, and return the next night to watch if any one came to brush them away. This he could easily effect; for, at the time he had first noticed them, he had measured them by his own feet; and taken the stride between them, that he might discover whether the step was that of a short or a tall man; he therefore, in pursuance of his new-formed project, replaced as nearly as possible all the effaced prints on the sand, from the spot where they had been first visible on turning down the bank from the public road, until they reached the high-water mark where the waves had covered them. This done, Duncan returned to Fernbraes, in the intention of waiting the result, taking care to tell every one he met by the way that, though the large footsteps had been brushed off the sand in the night, they had reappeared at daybreak, as it was well known that, whatever pains were taken to conceal a crime, the earth would never cover it.

The laird, though sincerely grieved for the accident which he feared must have happened to his poor old nurse, refused to credit any of the stories which were afloat upon the subject, and respect for him prevented all the surmises which were current from coming to his ear. He naturally conjectured that the absence and subsequent intoxication of Joek Glass had left the horse to his own will, and that the undirected animal had certainly overturned the cart and the poor old woman into the sea, where her cap might have stuck among the rocks. He was too well acquainted with the love of the vulgar in all countries for the marvellous and the horrible to believe that any crime had been committed, as, if in such a case the inclination existed, he could not discover any possible motive for its commission.

Duncan was, however, strongly prepossessed with another opinion, though he did not choose to tell his master the surmises which gained strength in his own mind the more he ruminated upon them; but, though he might keep the secret, he thought himself bound to revenge the deed.

As soon, therefore, as midnight had extended her raven wing over the sleeping world, and left the unblest hour under the influence of those who shun the light, he retraced his way along

the shore. The night was windy and exceedingly dark, but on such an errand he could not miss his way, and he reached the Black Rocks without meeting anything worse than himself: there, weary with his own thoughts, he sat down to listen, but all except the whistling of the wind and the beating of the surf was perfectly still. Once or twice he fancied he heard his own name repeated in a voice familiar to his ear; but whether it was really a wailing voice, or the sighing of the wind round the rocks, and through the long, dry tangle which hung about them, he could not determine.

At another time he fancied he saw a huge black figure occupied as Rory More had described; but, though he followed as fast as the darkness of the night would permit, and called repeatedly upon the creature, whether of this world or of another, to stay and face him, he received no answer but from the echoes on the shore, which repeated "Face me!"

Vexed to be baffled in these attempts, and resolved, if possible to accomplish his wish, he continued to stride backward and forward on the same path until day broke, and he discovered to his astonishment that the large footsteps were again covered over as on the preceding night. What to think of it he could not determine; but the natural hardihood of his mind triumphed over his superstitious fears, and he again replaced the marks as he had done before, resolved to abide another watch. He had his own motives for keeping his movements secret from his master, and his midnight rambles remained unknown to all except the object for whom they were undertaken.

Night after night he made the same excursion with the same ill success, and morning after morning he had the mortification to perceive that the marks of the preceding day were always effaced. Sleep forsook his eyes and colour his cheeks as he passed his nights in these dreary watches, or conflicts with the Evil One, as he was almost disposed now to believe them. The country rung with accounts of the strange steps and noises that were heard every night on the road from Kelpfield to the Black Rocks, and the quantity of footsteps that were found on the sand, like the march of a regiment of men.

These frightful reports had gained such currency and credit, that few would venture to pass by the ill-omened spot after nightfall, and none unless under the influence which defies fear, after the long hour has given the world over to the machinations of those who can only claim one in the twenty-four.

This harassing state of things had continued for not less than fourteen successive nights, and Duncan, although thwarted in his object, only became the more resolved in his pursuit: his daring was roused to such a pitch—for these successive failures made him almost think that it was not an earthly being he had to contend with; but with Hamlet he was resolved, could he but see the creature of his search,

"To cross it, though it blast him."

"I will return to this place," he said to himself, "while the life is in my body, until I see this thing, whatever it is, and know what it means."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"And lifting thence the burden which he bore,
Heaved up the bank, and dash'd it from the shore,
Then paused, and look'd, and turn'd, and seem'd to
watch,
And still another hurried glance would catch."

SPOURED on by intense curiosity and thirst of revenge, which gained strength as its gratification was delayed, Duncan set out for his accustomed haunt at a much earlier hour than he had hitherto done, and had hardly turned down the steep bank when he discovered the very object of his search in the act, as has been described, of scratching on the sand. Duncan stopped a moment to consider the creature before him, and was soon convinced that the bulky person he saw thus employed was no unsubstantial inhabitant of air, but one compounded of grosser elements; and, goaded on by the desire of punishing a wretch whom he could not for an instant doubt had been the murderer of his mother, he grasped the sword with which he had armed himself for the purpose, and making a sudden leap, struck his antagonist such a blow on the shoulder that he brought him on his face and hands to the ground; but, before he had time to lay hold of his fallen foe, or to disentangle himself from the mass of drapery in which he was shrouded, the wounded man had drawn a pistol from his cloak, and fired with such a certain aim, that Duncan, mortally wounded, fell on the sand; the other, forgetting his disguise in his anxiety to make sure work of what he could not now leave half done, threw off his garment from his right arm, and drew near the dying man.

"It is you," said Duncan, regarding the figure which bent over him, and the eyes which scowled upon him from under the dark folds of the plaid; "ye are the only man on earth who had reason to fear my poor mother; but tell me what ye have done with her, and I will forgive you this."

"Busy, prying fool, take this for your pains!" answered the other; and, as he spoke, discharged a second pistol at the head of his defenceless enemy.

The bullet did its work, and Duncan moved no more. As soon as the assassin was satisfied that the deed was accomplished, he dragged the body (which was too weighty for him to carry) along the shore into the deep water under the rocks, which was now ebbing fast, and would consequently carry it out to sea. He then endeavoured to efface the track which the body had made on the sand; but a faint watery ray of the moon, which was at its full, and had lighted him on the work of death, and discovered his features to the dying Duncan, was now obscured by dark clouds, presaging rain, which he hoped would more effectually serve him.

The impossibility of accomplishing what he wished in the dark, and the pain of his wounded shoulder, now forced him to desist, and think of retreat while it was in his power, trusting that a shower of rain would fall to wash out the marks he was obliged to leave behind him. He bound his plaid as tightly as he could round his left shoulder to alleviate the pain, and, if possible, stanch the bleeding, or, at all events, absorb the blood, rather than let it track his course, and appear as a witness against him. Having

done this, he gained the main road above the bank, and then disappeared by a path best known to himself, leaving no mark by which he could be traced.

Duncan McLean's absence and irregular attendance at Fernbraes had been so common since the night on which his mother was missing, that his nonappearance on the morning after the fatal events we have just mentioned did not excite any remark, nor was there any anxiety felt on his account until the arrival of Eppie Tamson at breakfast with the very sword in her hand which every individual at Fernbraes knew to have been poor Duncan's most valued possession: the edge was in one place turned, and there was blood on the blade.

Eppie Tamson came flying up the road, or avenue, as Miss Jamesina called it, brandishing the sword, and screaming, "Oh, sirs! ochon ori! has na there been killing! has na there been murder! has na there been foul work at the Black Rocks wast by yonder! There is a loch of blood upon the sands, and the shape of a man's braid back, forbye brains!"

"What is the woman talking about?" said the doctor, who had thrown open a sash of the dining-room window when her frantic exclamations first reached his ear. "What is she doing with that sword, and how did she come by it?"

"I found it, Fernbraes," she said, coming up to the open window, "upon the sand; but look at it yourself—look at the edge of it, and look at the blade of it, and see to the colour that's upon it, an judge for yourself if I am no right in what I say, that there has been foul work at the Black Rocks."

The doctor took the sword, which every servant in the place, who now came crowding together to know the cause of Eppie Tamson's outcries, declared to belong to Duncan McLean.

"But where is he?" said his master; "call him, that he may answer for himself."

"He is no in the house sir, nor has he been in it all night, for his bed is as cold as last year's snow."

Cussim Ali now came forward, and gave his evidence in the best English he had acquired. "True, sahib, true; he not sleep in this house for many night, since what time his mother gone nobody know where. Many a time, when I get up for *pugeah** at the rising sun, I see for him come in with that tulwar, and he look sorry and tire, like man who seek his enemy and not find him; this night he go out, that I know, but this morning he not come back."

Fernbraes now called to mind all the stories which had been in circulation, and though they appeared involved in mystery, there was too much reason to fear that some extraordinary crime had been committed, though who were the parties he could not conjecture. A dread preyed upon his mind that poor Duncan had taken vengeance into his own hands, and he feared to find that in this instance the faithful creature had been the aggressor.

Eppie Tamson's intelligence opened the mouths of all about her, who did not now hesitate to declare with one voice that they believed old Madge had been put out of the way by unfair means.

"Put out of the way!" echoed Fernbraes;

* *Pugeah*—worship.

"who would think of meddling with such a poor old creature, or what would they put her out of the way for?"

"It does not become me to say," answered the griever; "but it is an odd thing to be lost off the public highway between this and the Black Rocks, and that her son should be murdered for putting the muckle fitsteps on the sand, that were found there the night she was taken awa."

"Big footsteps!" answered his master, "who could they belong to? Is there any man in the parish that has bigger feet than the rest? A good way to know that would be—" he suddenly stopped what he was going to say, and coloured redder than crimson as a circumstance passed through his mind.

Every one had his own conjectures, but respect gave them no utterance. Fernbraes broke off the conversation with orders to some of those present to attend him to the place spoken of—an order which was gladly applied by every individual present to him and her self; so that, when the laird rode down the avenue, he was followed by a troop of men, women, and children, all eager to see with their own eyes what had taken place.

When they did arrive, there could no longer be a doubt upon the subject. It was evident that something fatal had taken place, though who were the aggressors and who were the sufferers did not at first appear. The sand was deeply dyed in one particular spot, and covered with footsteps which were of two different sizes; those of the largest dimensions were most round the place where the victim had fallen, and some of them were still wet in blood. The griever, with the end of his stick, dug down into the sand, and showed his master that there must have been, as Eppie Tamson had said, a loch of blood in that place to penetrate so deep. From it, also, the track to the sea was visible. It was plain that pains had been taken in some places for its erasure, though the darkness in which the deed must have been perpetrated had caused the person, whoever he was who made the attempt, to deviate from the exact line, and consequently, in some places, it was found untouched, so that it could be clearly discerned that a weighty body had been dragged along. At the rocks the tracks were lost, and they were all of one opinion that the murdered body had been thrown into the sea.

"The big fitsteps are aboot the red mark," said the griever, "and I am right sure that it is our Duncan that has suffered, as his poor mother did before him."

Fernbraes had made the same remark, and, full of anxiety for the fate of his trusty follower, ordered the people to separate into companies, and proceed along the shore in different directions, in the idea that the body of the murdered man would be cast up by the flood, and terminate doubt in certainty.

Stoneyards was a magistrate, and little as Fernbraes wished to see him after what had past at their last meeting, he thought it right to ride over and require his assistance in the present circumstances. Dismissing, therefore, his attendants on their different errands, he proceeded alone to the inhospitable dwelling of

his brother-in-law, never less inclined to recognise their relationship than at this hour.

At the gate he was met by the young laird, who, after an awkward attempt at a civil salutation (for he had not forgotten or forgiven his uncle's rejoicing on the expected arrival of his brother Malcolm), told him that his father had come home sick from the hill, and was in bed at that moment, and could not be spoken with.

At this information the doctor felt a strange sort of uneasiness; but he was instantly relieved by hearing his nephew say, that when they had come to tell him that something was wrong, his father, before going to sleep, had given orders about Duncan M'Lean's business, as he was in great wrath that such a thing should have taken place, as one might say, at his own door. He had sent for the constables, and told them what they were to do.

"That's well, Hugh! but surely your father must be very ill to go to bed at this hour of the day; and if that is the case, it is fortunate that I am come in time to help him. Sudden illnesses are not just the thing for strong men of his size and years."

"I wanted to send to Fernbraes when he told me of it," answered Hugh, with indifference, "but he would not hear of doctors or doctoring—he never had much faith in their skill."

"That may be, Hugh, as he never stood in need of it; but go to him, and tell him that I am upon the spot."

Hugh, who seemed perfectly indifferent about the whole matter, did as he was bid, but soon returned to say that his father was asleep, and that he did not like to disturb him.

"If that is the case, Hugh," said the doctor, "when he wakes he will maybe no need me; and if he does, ye can send a line to Fernbraes, and I'll be with you without loss of time."

When Fernbraes arrived at home, he found worthy Mr. Shiftwell, the sheriff-clerk of the county, in close consultation with Miss Jamesina. "He had been greatly shocked to hear of all the alarms which the good family at Fernbraes had suffered, and he had mounted his gallows, and ridden over to offer his poor services, as far as they would go in the county, to discover who were the perpetrators, aiders, and abettors of such horrid acts."

Miss Jamesina was all gratitude for such friendly interest, and she protested that she could not think enough of Mr. Shiftwell's coming to them in such a time of distress, though she did not believe that any one could help them. After what had passed, she would be afraid to go the length of herself in the dark—it was awful to think of it; the old woman always had a character of keening more than she ought to do, and the way in which she went away seemed very like it. For her own part, she would not be surprised if all the marks on the sand turned out to be but glamour, and that Duncan was, after all, just whisked away in a whirlwind by his unehancy mother.

Miss Jamesina had always been particularly averse to the idea that any act of violence had taken place, and preferred the much more probable supposition which she made to her old confidential friend, who was too civil flatly to contradict her, though he was in his law capacity much inclined to doubt that her account of

the matter would stand in any court. He had his own reasons, too, for being satisfied with what she said, though after her uncle's return she let the subject drop, well knowing that her opinions were not likely to meet with his approbation; he was, however, too much occupied with his own thoughts to attend to her gossip. The singular fate of two persons in his family (for he had now no doubt but that his foster-brother was the victim, since there was no other man missing in the parish), and what reason any one could have to commit such crimes upon those who had always lived in love and respect with their neighbours, was a mystery he could not solve.

"Did you ever hear, Mr. Shiftwell," he inquired, "of Madge M'Lean or her son Duncan's being upon ill terms with any one in the county?"

"No, certainly," interrupted Jamesina, "no-body ever heard of such a thing. Duncan was always well liked, far and near; and his mother too, if it were no the notion that some people had of her being no ower canny."

Mr. Shiftwell took his cue from the fluent speaker, and answered civilly,

"I cannot say that ever I did, Fernbraes; the only one that I knew of that had reason to be ill-pleased with her, would think scorn to notice the like of her."

"Who was it—and what was it about, Mr. Shiftwell?"

The worthy clerk, who seemed gratified at the prospect of more attention than the laird usually bestowed upon him, opened his mouth with a preparatory "Hem!"

Miss Jamesina made him a sign, and he closed by observing,

"It's an old story—in the time of my late worthy predecessor, old Mr. Fox."

"What for would you tell my uncle, Mr. Shiftwell?" said Miss Jamesina, as soon as Fernbraes had left the room; "what need is there to gang over bygone tales, when ye see he is vexed with one thing after another! These old stories have nothing to do with this."

"As you say, Miss Jamesina, as you say; and you know that there are none of your friends who would be so sorry to vex the laird in this time of perplexity as myself—you have not one who is more devoted to your interest than your humble servant, Farquhar Shiftwell."

Miss Jamesina replied with a glance of disdain to what she felt to be a very presumptuous profession on the part of old Donald Fox's head clerk, as she had been accustomed to call him before he stepped into the shoes of his patron; but this was not a time to provoke him with scorn, and though he felt the motive, he was for the present content to overlook it, satisfied that he knew more of Miss Jamesina's affairs than would permit of her breaking with him.

These friends of old standing separated, therefore, with the same cordiality with which they had met, though Jamesina could not help muttering to herself, after he had taken his departure,

"It well sets him, indeed, the weaver's son at the West Loch, to even himself to me—the little, sneaking creature that he is—because he thinks that I canna do without him; but if Kelpfield only comes back, I'll let him see that I'll gar him stand with his hat in his hand, in-

stead of glowering with his green eyes, and calling himself my humble servant indeed!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"La noirceur masque en vain les poisons qu' elle verse,
Tout ce sait tot ou tard et la vérité perce :
Par eux mêmes souvent les méchants sont trahis."
Gresset.

In the evening Fernbraes proposed sending over a messenger to Stoneyards to ask for Mr. Sinclair, as they had received no tidings from his son; a proposal, however, to which Miss Jamesina objected: she said, if her father was not very well, the noise of the servants in the house clattering with every strange face they saw would disturb him, and at present their heads were so in the bees that there was no getting time to hold their tongues; besides, they were so full of ghosts and witches that she doubted if any of them would venture. At any rate, she thought she had better walk over herself in the morning and see her father, and, if her uncle had no objection, just stay two or three days for change of scene; for really, as her uncle was going into the county-town about what had happened, she was afraid to stay at Fernbraes by herself.

The doctor made no objection to her arrangement, and, accordingly, next morning, after having seen him set forth on his business, she walked over to Stoneyards, taking only a herdbooy with her to carry the things she thought necessary, and whom she discharged at her father's door, taking her bundle out of his hand, and not permitting him to enter or speak with any one, on pretence of making a noise.

As soon as she got into the house, she asked of the fat, barefooted lass, who was the first person she met, "What was the matter with Stoneyards?"

"The matter, mem? Indeed, mem, it's no me that kens. The laird came home sick from the hill yesterday morning before one of us was up, and he has no been out of his chamber sin' syne."

"But ye has been in it, Tibbie, and what does he say ails him?"

"That's more than I can tell, mem. I was but in the laird's room ance, when I took up some broth to him, and he had the curtains of the blue bed closed around him, so that I didna see his face—but his voice sounded like a sick man."

"But I hope that Betty Robieson has been waiting upon him, as ye has been with him so little."

"It's no for want of will, mem, that I have no waited upon him; but it's no muckle that he wants; and if it be no once like me, she has no been much about him either."

From these interrogations Miss Jamesina learned that her father had come home ill without being seen by any of his household, that they were ignorant of his complaint, and that it did not seem to attract any particular notice in the house.

"You know, mem, that he had always the custom of going to the hill long before daylight to see what the shepherds were about, and that he went in and out as he likit himself. No one ever took any notice of him, and he went or he came as he saw fit."

Satisfied with this account, Miss Jamesina desired the maiden to get her room ready for her, as she meant to stay a day or two at Stoneyards, and next went in quest of her brother, whom she found whistling and dressing his fishing-tackle.

"I am sorry to hear, Hugh, that our father is so ill. What is the matter with him?"

"Troth, Jamesy, I don't very well know; but I fancy it must be something, since he has neither eaten nor drank since he has been in the blue bed, if it be not water, and I think a man must be ill indeed who takes to such drink when he could do better."

"But what does he complain of? If he is so bad as that, surely he complains of something; and why will he no see our uncle?"

"Ye ken he has often said that he doesna like any of the black cattle without horns—that means ministers, lawyers, and doctors; but I may as well tell you, Jamesina, though he desired that I would not speak about it to anybody, that yesterday morning he fell into a hole going to the hill, and hurt and cut his foot so much that he canna put it under him; indeed, he would not have told me if I had not seen blood upon his clothes, by the token that I threw some of them into the fire, as he told me that everybody's head in the country is so turned with fearful things just now, that he did not wish to have his share of it."

During this narrative Jamesina's usually stationary colour had varied once or twice, and she almost found her worst fears realized; but she made no comment to her brother, except that he had done very wisely to keep himself out of the mouth of fools at such a time, and to inquire whether he had told the circumstance to their younger sister.

"What do you take me for, Jamesina? Am I like a woman, to let my tongue run? Besides, Barbara is down to spend a week with Mrs. M'Askel."

"So much the better," thought Jamesina; but she only answered, "I never suspected you, Hugh, of anything of the kind; I know that you are above that, and I would lay my life upon it that nobody will ever hear of this from you, not even our uncle if he should come here; for you know he has some queer ways, and may try, not knowing your cleverness, to find out what he wants; but he would never let you find out what he was to do with Fernbraes, and now you may be upsides with him."

"And so I will," answered Hugh, swallowing the bait.

Jamesina then left him and proceeded to her father's apartment, where, after having knocked twice, she was desired to come in. She was at once sensible, as the maid had told her, that there was a great change in his voice, and that he spoke in a tone of feebleness, which must either proceed from severe illness or some material cause. She went up to the bed and inquired very particularly into the state of his health, but in answer could only extract general complaints of illness and inability to walk from the pain of a swelled and sprained ankle.

Jamesina wished to send for her uncle, a proposal which was at once negatived. Her father told her he wanted nothing but rest and quiet to be quite himself again, and that the

sight of a doctor would make him worse, and not better.

She inspected, with a scrutinizing glance, the whole appearance of the room and bed. She remarked that there was no part of the clothes he must have put off visible; but she at the same time observed that there was nothing to confirm her worst fears, or, rather, to excite the suspicion of others. The bed stood in a kind of dark recess; the curtains were drawn all round it, so that, though she ventured to hold them back when she was speaking, she could only see that her father's countenance was much paler than usual. She thought that he seemed pleased, after having rejected her proposal to send for her uncle, to hear that he was from home, and that she intended to stay at Stoneyards during his absence.

"You will like better to have me in your room," she said, "than that idle taupies of lasses, when ye are sick; and I'll take care that they dinna make noise aboot the house, or let a' the waif folk in the country come clavering here."

"Do that, Jamesina," he answered, feebly; "and now leave me—I think I will sleep."

Jamesina left the room, but when she got to the outside of the door, stood to listen. She heard a groan of great pain, which she was certain must have been suppressed in her presence.

Wishing, if possible, to get more light on the subject which haunted her, she stole on softly to the door of a room which was occupied by her father as a kind of private apartment, where he kept his clothes and papers, and settled his accounts; but it was locked, and she could not enter.

After a moment's reflection, she knew that was a thing which often occurred, particularly when her father had made sales, as he always kept the sums of money which he received from butchers and wool-dealers in that room. Her mother's apartment was the next to it. There she had died; and it had never been opened or occupied since her death—from the day of her funeral it had remained locked up. She knew that there was a door from it into her father's counting-room, as it was called, and she recollected that the door opened inwardly. The temptation was strong. By this means she would probably come to the knowledge of what she had to dread, and be enabled to take measures against it, if such were necessary. The key was in her own possession, and hung, with all the other spare keys, on a nail in the storeroom. She instantly descended to take it from the spot where it had remained so long, that it was scarcely to be perceived in the cobwebs which covered it, fully determined, as soon as the house was quiet, to seize this opportunity of satisfying the mixed feeling of dread and curiosity which tormented her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"See how the host's kind heart with pleasure beats,
And conscious joy, while thus his friends he greets,
Them welcomes to his hospitable home,
With warmth and generous feeling all his own,
Rejoiced again beneath his roof to find
Those whom with sorrow he had left behind."

THORNTON.

JAMESINA was interrupted in her meditations

by the trampling of horses' feet in the little stone-paved court before the door, and, looking out, was surprised to see Niel Ronaldson dismount from his own horse, while he gave the bridle of hers, which he had brought with him, ready saddled, to a lad whom their noise had brought from the stable. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought Miss Jamesina; "the world is surely turned upside down, when I cannot get leave to stay peaceably here for a meal of meat but there must be an express sent after me. What's wrong next?"

She went down stairs with all speed to prevent talking below, and at the house-door met the individual Niel, who told her that an English gentleman and two ladies, friends of his master's, had arrived at Fernbraes, and that the black creature, Cussim Ali, had sworn that his master would break his heart if they went away from his house and "he no at home." He thought it best to take her horse and bring back Miss Jamesy; and he told the cornal, for it seems that was his title, what he was going to do, who, honest man, seemed very well pleased; and Cussim Ali, who knew our master's likings of old, had set the cook to work without loss of time.

His auditor had lost all patience at this detail. "Was ever anything so vexatious!" she said. "Heard ever onybody the like of folks coming this gate to herry a man's house in his absence. What for, Niel Ronaldson, did ye na just tell them that the laird and the ledly were from home, and that ye didna ken when they would be back—and is this a time for feasting and guzzling? Oh, pity me wi' you! I have a good mind to send you back, Niel, to tell them that I am here!"—"with my sick father," she was going to add, but she thought better of it; that was a subject upon which, perhaps, the less that was said the better; and she recollected, too, that if it was known in the country that Stoneyards was sick, it would not be thought that much was the matter with him when his daughter left his house to go and entertain company.

This last consideration fixed her, and she returned into the house, first telling Niel Ronaldson to get her horse ready, to tell her brother what had happened, and to desire that he would inform her father that she would come back the first moment she could.

Hugh, finding that there was company at Fernbraes, and that his uncle, whom he could not endure, was absent, wished to go over with Jamesina. "Ye will want somebody to sit with this strange cornal after dinner, Jamesy."

"No, no, Hugh; has na my uncle said, a thousand times, and a thousand to tell it, that men in the Indies don't care for sitting as ye do here."

"But, for a' that, for the honour of the family, ye must hae somebody to pass the bottle, as ye cannot do it yourself."

"Never fear. Our father will maybe want you, and it would no likely be just so pleasant for you, Hugh, who are the head of the family, to hear them speaking of Malcolm's coming in before you, and that turn makes you quits with my uncle, if ye never go near his house."

"And so it does, Jamesina," observed the disappointed youth, who, in the prospect of a good sitting, had been willing to let the affront put upon his seniority lie dormant until a fitter opportunity.

His sister left him, satisfied that she had carried her point. "It would be strange indeed if

I could na make such a stirk as he do my bidding," she thought.

Mounting her pony, she retraced her way to Fernbraes, taking the key of her "mother's room" with her, though not a little vexed at the delay her curiosity was obliged to suffer. She had leisure, however, to reflect that the dress she then wore, though perfectly good for walking over the hill to Stoneyards, was not in the least fit to be presented before English strangers; and when she reached the house, she first marched to her own apartment, where she required the assistance of her handmaid, Kate Roy, to make a more fashionable toilet.

When this important metamorphosis was completed, she descended to the drawing-room, where Colonel Cheapstow, after having introduced himself as the old friend of Dr. M'Alpin, presented Mrs. and Miss Cheapstow to Miss Sinclair.

The names were well known to her, as she had often heard them spoken of by her uncle, though he had not made her acquainted with Eleonora's story; and, as she had an object in satisfying him just at present, she exerted in her way all her powers of pleasing. After the first compliments were over, Mrs. Cheapstow asked Miss Sinclair when she had heard from her brother Malcolm, and understood with pleasure that there was a prospect of his immediate return.

Jamesina made a thousand excuses for the absence of her uncle, who, she said, she knew would regret his being from home more than she could tell; Colonel Cheapstow at once said that, as his only object in coming to the Highlands was to visit his old friend, and that he had forgotten to apprise him of his intention, he would certainly remain quietly where he was until the return of his host, which he fancied could not be very distant.

Jamesina was alarmed at this resolution, and saw there was no alternative between the weariness of entertaining strangers when her mind was racked by other things, and sending off an immediate express after her uncle, to inform him that his friends had arrived. Without such an urgent necessity for his presence, she would certainly have been much better pleased with his absence, which would have left her more at liberty; but, as things stood, she was forced "to put the best face upon the matter," and not give any one reason to suppose she had more to think of than other people.

"It is so provoking, too," she thought, "that, just when strangers are come, Kelpfield must needs go to London, at the very time when there will be such feasting and doings in this house, that he couldna pass being here every day; but with this fine journey all that will be for nothing. What is the good of taking trouble for the old colonel and his family, and asking all the country to meet them? If he had been here, I would no have grudged the turkeys, and the ducks, and the geese, let alone the fat bullock my uncle will kill, do and say what I can against it. I thought, maybe, that beast would be killed for another occasion."

Colonel Cheapstow and the ladies, fatigued with their journey, soon retired for the night, leaving their officious hostess more at liberty to speculate upon her own affairs. The events of the last fortnight had now become hateful to her ears; and being obliged to hear all the idle rumours afloat in the county, and the new particulars every day retailed from one to another, with the

insatiable love for the marvellous which seemed to have annihilated every other feeling in the minds of her neighbours and servants, was a state of society from which she would gladly have escaped.

Next morning she had every circumstance to go over with her guests, who had heard them from their own servants, who had gathered them from the domestics in the house. She could not, with her English visitors, insist so much on the probability of witchcraft as she had been in the habit of doing with all her own household when her uncle was not within hearing, and she suffered martyrdom when, at the sum of the whole, the colonel said "that he hoped the cowardly assassin would be taken and hanged."

Before breakfast was finished, a repast, by-the-by, of which Colonel Cheapstow very much approved, a scrawling note was brought from Stoneyards, written, as Mr. Hugh told his sister, at his father's commands, to desire that she would come back immediately, "as he was not better, but much worse."

What to do in such circumstances puzzled Miss Jamesina more than before. To go away and leave everything to the care of servants, to do what they liked, and to live at rack and manger, when the house was full of company, was a moral impossibility; but her presence was indispensable at home, to keep people from making discoveries which might have frightful consequences. Yet how to account to her uncle for leaving his house at such a time, without telling him of her father's illness, and he the very last person that should know it, was what she could not determine, even accustomed as she was to seek ostensible reasons very different from those by which she was actuated. She thought of telling him that, in her sister's absence, an offer had been made for the butter and cheese at Stoneyards, and that her father had ordered her to see it all weighed and classed according to the different rates. This, she knew, would have been a feasible enough reason for her staying away a day or two at any other time; but just when he was from home himself, and when his greatest friends were come, she feared it would not do, and that he would suspect that there was something under it.

"He has such curious ways with him," she thought, "sometimes a child might blindfold him and lead him by the nose, and at others all my art will not make him believe but what he likes himself. Indeed, I sometimes think every silly body about the place has more credit with him than me."

Jamesina's tact, subtle as it was, could never lead her to comprehend a character like her uncle's. To the false, truth does not exist.

While she was turning over in her mind what sort of an excuse would be best, the agreeable noise of horses' feet clattering up the avenue drew her to the window, and in another minute her uncle was welcoming the friends he had so much wished to see. Long intimacy had endeared them to each other, and when Jamesina witnessed the meeting, she hugged herself in the wisdom of her conduct towards them.

"Welcome to Fernbraes, my excellent friends," said the doctor, cordially taking a hand of Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow; "and you will see, my dear Eleonora, that I have not forgotten all the promises I made on board ship of making you acquainted with my country. We only want my nephew now to be perfectly happy."

"And we'll have him, too, uncle, before long," joined Miss Jamesina.

"Ye may think," continued the doctor, "that at first sight, Mrs. Cheapstow, this place is not altogether what I used to describe to you at Lucknow, but I hope you will like it better when you know it longer."

"I have no doubt of it, my excellent friend; the weather was so fine yesterday when we arrived that I have a most favourable impression of it."

"At all events, you are well lodged here," said the colonel, "and you ought to have, judging from your situation, abundance of excellent fish and mutton, with venison and moor-game to boot—things which go far to make any place pleasant."

"We have all these things in abundance, colonel, as I hope to show you by-and-by; in the mean time, let us return to the breakfast-table, for I have not yet broke bread."

"How wrong it was of you, uncle, to come out without taking something!" said Jamesina; "if I had been there I would have looked after you, who never think of yourself."

Jamesina, affectionately attentive to her uncle's wishes, particularly when she had a purpose to carry, went down stairs herself to order what she knew he liked best, and waited until he had finished his meal before she told him that she had a message from her brother, who wanted her at Stoneyards for some reason or another.

Miss Jamesina found, on second thoughts, that the more casual her movements seemed to be, the less notice they were likely to attract; and she thought, also, that it would be useless to say anything about time, as she trusted that perhaps chance might stand her friend, and furnish her with a better excuse for not reappearing that night than she might be able to invent. Her palfrey was therefore ordered, and, after taking a ceremonious leave of the "stranger ladies," she set forth, leaving her uncle too happy in the society of his friends to occupy himself much about her. She had given orders before her departure which she hoped would keep him in good-humour with her, whether she returned or not; for she had wisely considered that, if everything at table was as it ought to be, her presence would be the less missed. She had charged the old housekeeper and cook "to exert their skill for the honour of the Highlands, and show the great colonel and the English ladies that they were no just come into a land of savages."

The fearful waste all this would occasion was, to be sure, very grievous and hard to be borne, but, to keep people's thoughts from things with which they had nothing to do, "it would be a well warranted." She had even condescended so far as to take "the black creature," as she always called Cussim Ali, into consultation upon what the Lucknow gentleman best liked.

The servants and neighbours had now other things to think of than what had lately taken place; the arrival of guests at Fernbraes was soon generally known, and in the course of the day, all the nearest neighbours had come to pay their respects to the strangers, and show their regard for the laird by inviting him and his visitors to every house within ten miles round. Among the number was the doctor's friend and favourite, Miss Robina Ross; and, though he was not much accustomed to observe such things, he could not help remarking that she seemed

struck with Eleonora from the first moment of their meeting.

"I am glad to see, Miss Robina," he said, "that ye like my little lassie; for that is the name she always gets from me."

"There is something in her sweet face, Fernbraes, that brings back the days of lang syne to my heart. She is the living picture of my poor brother Kenneth, who is dead and gone."

Miss Ross, charmed with her new acquaintance, paid a long visit, and engaged the doctor and his guests to come and cheer her solitude; "for, since my brother went to London, I have not seen a single creature. But it is curious that all this time I should forget my friend Jamesina. Where is she, doctor?"

"Rode over to Stoneyards two hours ago: her brother wanted her, it seems."

Miss Robina had more reason for remarking this information than any one was aware of. The evening after the murder of Duncan M'Lean—for his disappearance now went universally by that name—she had been to visit a sick person near the shore, and, as the fineness of the weather tempted her, returned part of the way on the sands. Her attention was attracted by something black in the surf, which was rolling in at her feet with the flowing tide, and she stopped to ascertain, if possible, what it could be, prepossessed with the idea that it might have some connexion with the horrible transactions of the last night. When it came within reach, she stretched forward her umbrella, and drew to land a shoe of more than ordinary dimensions.

"Is it possible?" she thought, looking earnestly at the object before her, which was of better workmanship than the brogues usually worn by the common people, and was tied with a riband instead of a leathern thong, or *point*, as they called them; "and this, then, is the termination of this fearful night's work: this is what it has come to at last! There was no other man in the country that had an interest to do what has been done but him that this shoe belongs to, and if it were not for them that must bear the disgrace of his guilt, I would this moment send it to them who would let him hear of it; but this must not be. Wicked as he is, it is enough for them to be kin to such as he. This must not come upon them, and never shall it, if I can help it."

Miss Robina stood looking at the soaked shoe, and then, wrapping it up in her pocket-handkerchief, returned to her own home, where she deposited it out of the way. She had seen somebody from Stoneyards, who had mentioned to her that the laird was not well. When she heard, at Fernbraes, of Jamesina's sudden call, she felt fully persuaded that Stoneyards must have been very severely wounded in the encounter; for, all circumstances taken together, left not a doubt that he was the man. It was clear to her that Fernbraes was unacquainted with the causes of suspicion against his brother-in-law, though she fancied that it must be otherwise with Jamesina; and she returned home after her visit, not a little vexed with the sort of connivance into which she was forced.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Art thou but

A false creation—
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business, which informs
Thus to mine eyes."—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Jamesina arrived at Stoneyards, she found her father suffering from a violent attack of fever, which had come on in the night, and which seemed to her to be of a very serious appearance. His sleep was short and interrupted, frequently broken by starts and mutterings, which she was sensible would be but too likely to attract notice from any one within hearing. What to do in such circumstances she hardly knew. She would have given much to have had the advice of her uncle; but she knew that if he came he must discover what she most wished to conceal, and she feared that the impetuosity of his temper, and his feelings of right and wrong, would not permit his lending countenance to any concealment of such aggravated offences. At any rate, she would endeavour to find out what there was to *conceal* before she ventured upon seeking such perilous assistance.

As soon as the house was quiet for the night, which was at a very early hour, though to her impatience it seemed never likely to arrive, she took up a candle, and stole softly to her mother's room. The servants slept so far out of hearing, in the top of one of the wings, that she did not dread interruption from them, and her brother Hugh had, as usual, taken such a potent share of whiskey-punch, that she was very certain, though his room was in the same part of the house, that few sounds could disturb him after his head was once upon his pillow. She opened the door of the forbidden apartment, and, as soon as she entered, shut it softly after her, almost afraid to find herself in a place which remained in the exact state in which it was left the day of her mother's funeral. She trembled as she passed the mirror, and saw her own gliding figure reflected back from its dark surface. She held the lock of her father's room-door in her hand for a few minutes after she had turned the bolt, almost incapable to enter, not knowing, as she thought, what she might see there, and, notwithstanding her old habits of eavesdropping, feeling something like remorse at the step she was taking; but the idea that it was for good, and not for evil, encouraged her to open the door—and she saw enough to convince her that her worst fears were realized, and that her parent was a murderer!

While she was gazing on the fearful plaid—literally dyed in its horrid hue—she fancied that the outer lock of the opposite door slowly turned; she might be deceived, but, on looking again, was convinced that the bolt was withdrawn. Terrified at the idea of being caught in such a situation, she snatched up her candle, and escaped by the way she came; but she had not shut the door after her when she heard her father say, in a tone of strange emotion,

"Are you too come from the grave to witness against me?"

"It is me!" she exclaimed, as well as her agitation would permit, fearful that his noise would betray him. "It is me!"

"I know it, Marion; and ye are come to tell me that, though murder may lie hid for years, it will rise in judgment at last."

Jamesina, aware of his critical situation, made a desperate effort, opened the door, and stood before him. His glazed eyes and wandering intellect could hardly discern the living being who spoke from her whom his imagination had conjured up from the grave to upbraid him with his crimes.

"Hear me, father, and be composed," said Jamesina, collecting her spirits for the effort. "No one knows this but me—no one need know it, if you will only be quiet; and it was that I might find means to hide it that brought me here. Be guided by me: return to your bed, and let me act."

The unexpectedness of the meeting—the sight of a woman's garment going out of *that* door, acting upon a guilty conscience, and a head confused by fever, almost persuaded Stoneyards that he had seen an inhabitant of the other world, and he stood pale and motionless before his daughter, his huge figure wrapped in a multitude of linen folds, which crossed over his right shoulder, and passed under the left arm; but when the first impression had passed from his mind, the hardened ruffian was almost disposed to laugh at his own weakness. He listened for a moment, and, finding all was still, said coolly,

"Ye are right, Jamesina, ye are quite right; and if I had been wise, I would have told you all this ill-fared scrape at first—but I cannot stand long; and, as ye said, I'll go back to my bed, for my head begins to swim; and when ye have locked the doors, come to me, and we'll talk of what is to be done to get over this bad job."

After he was gone, Jamesina fastened the doors of her mother's apartment as she had found them, and returned to her father, whom she found groaning in agony from the pain caused by his exertion. As soon as the smart of his wound had a little subsided, he proceeded to state what had been the motives of his conduct, according to his own ideas of right and wrong.

"Ye'll may be mind, Jamesy, that at the time of your grandfather's death, I took in hand his affairs as next of kin to the heir, and there were some sums besides which your uncle remitted for other things. As ill luck would have it, at that very time I was pressed for money, and as I knew that I could at any time replace it, I didna think much of taking what came into my hands to save my credit when I was so much in want of it; but, though things went very well after, and I greatly increased my sheep, I could never make it convenient to repay the money, and I just wrote a letter to your uncle in the Indies to give an account of my management, without saying anything about that. Your mother, who was better at the pen and ink than I was, came to the knowledge of the business.

"Auld Madge, who, ye kenned, was always an auld-farraned, lang-headed, glib-tongued wife, if she werena something waar, came by some of her cantrips to find it out also, and had the impudence to speak to me about it, at a time when she thought she had gotten an advantage over me; but it ill set the like o' her to dictate to me, and I garred send her out of the country for her pains, and she was keepit where I hoped she wad never have come to travail me again; but, by some cast of her trade, the laird is no lang back to Fernbraes, when the old hag cheated them that watched her, and got here as ye ken. I well knew that it wad na do to let her get her tongue loose, and I didna see much harm in

throwing an auld, useless creature like her into the sea, in place of letting her breed mischief in quiet families wi' going back on bygone tales. All that I am sorry for is, that I did na do it at once ten years ago, and now all this wadna hae come of it. I trusted that the countryfolk wad take her nonappearance for another flight like the first; but my feet on the sand took the notice of her muckle wrong-headed son, who must needs, to be sure, watch to discover. It wad never do for me to let such staps to be seen by the whole countryside, and I was therefore obliged to sweep them awa every night.

"Many a good laugh I hae had to myself while I was doing it; and once, when Rory More stopped to look, I roared like a seacalf, to keep him from coming back again; and I made myself sure that the neighbours wad be too much frightened with the notion that Madge had friends who could not show themselves in daylight to come and disturb me at such hours. But the fool Duncan, who was running on the fate that was dreed for him, must forsooth come upon me sword in hand, and, as I doubt, left me a kenspeckle mark on my left shoulder which will last me all my days—the blade is wellnigh cut from the back. What could I do in self-defence but put the life out o' him? for if I had na killed him, he wad hae killed me: however, after I had done it, I had leisure to know that the law would call it murder, so I made the best of my way home, though I had lost one of my shoes at the rocks, and cut my foot in consequence; but I have lost so much blood, and am so little able to help myself, that I doubt, without your assistance, I may be able to get through it."

"That ye shall have, depend upon it; but it is a pity ye didna tell me sooner."

"Yes, I might have known, Jamesy, that ye are no a woman to be frighted with straws."

Jamesina protested that she was relieved to hear that it was *no worse*; she did not very well see how her father could have helped the accident which happened with Duncan M'Lean, though she knew that it would not be so easy to persuade the rest of the world of that. The crimes committed were not, in her opinion, to be compared with the disgrace which would follow, if they were brought to light. To have the head of the family hanged like a thief by the common law, would be a blot forever in their 'scutcheon; "if it had been rebellion, or any gentleman-like crime, it would not signify; but all the stories that would bring out—oh! she would never live to hear them!"

With these thoughts and feelings, she set herself to deliberate what was to be done for her purpose. To get rid of the bloody plaid was not an easy undertaking, and all the rest of the clothes were in the same condition, with the exception of the stockings, neckcloth, and pocket-handkerchief, which had been bound round the wounded foot, and burned by Hugh.

She first thought of burning the rest also; but then she knew that the singed smell of wool at that hour would raise the inmates of the family with the idea that the house was on fire. She returned to the counting-room, where she burned the linen, and carried the woollen down to the little burn at the end of the house; and, as soon as she had deposited the clothes in the pool where the cattle drank, to steep, and placed stones on the several articles to prevent them being carried away with the stream, she returned into the room whence she had taken them,

and with soap and water carefully effaced every mark on the floor.

Stoneyards had, on reaching his own house, changed his clothes in his counting-room, and had wrapped a sheet tightly across his shoulder in place of the plaid. When his daughter had, with great pains, restored everything in the room to its usual appearance, she returned to the burn to withdraw the soaked garments, which she hoped had been thoroughly cleansed by the flow of pure water, not a little satisfied in her own mind with having been able to effect so much without leaving traces behind. Though her father's rough bandage had stanchd his wound, it had now become so painful and hard that it much aggravated his sufferings; before morning his fever returned with increased violence, and Jamesina plainly perceived that, without medical assistance, his life would be in danger. To send for her uncle was a thing not to be thought of, and to call in another medical man, without informing him, would be betraying her secret as effectually. She knew that Dr. Wiley at Doulour would neither see nor inquire into anything but what the family chose, and she earnestly wished that at present she could have his assistance. Once she thought of taking Hugh into her confidence, but she soon dismissed the idea as impolitic, and ultimately useless.

"He has neither head nor hands," she thought; "and if the worst comes to the worst, nobody can extort from him what he does not know."

In case of her father's death, a discovery must be made, and she dreaded the thought of figuring as heroine in such a tale. To contrive to get her uncle out of the way, and then to get the assistance of Dr. Wiley, was the only means which her head, fertile as it was, could devise: for this purpose, after mature consideration, she wrote the following letter to her sister, Mrs. M'Askel:

"Stoneyards.

"My dear Grizzly,

"As ye well know the sisterly interest that I take in you and yours, ye will be the less surprised at the proof of it I am going to give you: ye know well that the honour and credit of the family have always lain near my heart, and that I watch over everything that can touch it: ye will be pleased to learn that ye have an opportunity now to do, what will, without doubt, be agreeable to our uncle Fernbraes: ye know how precise he is about what he calls friendly attentions to them that are in his good graces, and how liberal he is in minding such things at another time. Now a thought has just struck me, that, as you wanted to send your son, my nephew Jemmy, to the Indies, this wad be the time to set about it. A great colonel of our uncle's friends is come to stay with him at Fernbraes for some time, with his wife and only child—a great heiress she will be, and it would be worth Archie's while, your husband's brother, to look after her. Now I was just thinking that, if ye were to ask him and them all to stay a week or so with you at Long Byars, it would please our uncle, and maybe profit you. He thought much of the things that ye sent him by the last carrier, because they came when he had friends in the house, and he wad think more of this. The sooner the invitation is sent, the better it will look. You have the circuit ball the night after to-morrow, and it would seem as if ye thought much of the pleasure of his friends to

ask the young lady there. If he goes he'll take so many things from Fernbraes with him that ye'll no have much trouble, and I'll take care to see to it myself.

"To prevent mistakes, I send this by express, and will expect an answer by return of Rob Johnson—if ye think fit, ye can write back to our uncle by him.

"With kind compliments to the laird and the bairns,

"Believe me, faithfully,

"Your very loving sister,

"JAMESINA SINCLAIR."

Having finished this epistle, she retired to take a little rest before the return of daylight permitted her to despatch the therein named Rob Johnson, with many charges "not to let grass grow under his feet" by the way, and promises of reward if he came soon back.

Her father's room was now put into such order, that she rather wished the servants of the family to enter, and took an opportunity to leave the door of his counting-room open, as they passed it, so that they could see his clothes, which she had dried at the fire, hanging over a chair in the place where he usually put them off. These she thought prudent precautions, as she was aware, from her brother Hugh, that some observations had been made upon Stoneyards' being taken ill, just then, for the first time in his life; and a cotter's wife even ventured to say in the kitchen that "she feared there was some evil coming over the family at Stoneyards, for she had the last night, when she went out late to bed her cow, seen a light in the 'lady's room,' where light hadna been since the night after her funeral."

These reports soon spread to Kelpfield, and brought up Miss Ross to inquire for Jamesina, whom she naturally concluded must find herself in a very disagreeable situation; and, as soon as they met, with the light she had already upon the subject, her penetration was at no loss to discover that things were exactly as she supposed.

Robina Ross had never felt affection for a person so different from herself as Jamesina Sinclair; but she was her mother's daughter, and that mother had been Robina's dearest friend. The families had always been intimate, and poor Mrs. Sinclair had, upon her death-bed, conjured Robina to continue the regard she had felt for her to her children. Could friendship have existed without esteem, Miss Ross would have felt it for Jamesina; but, setting affection out of the question, she certainly did feel interest in everything which related to the family of her early friend, and would have strained every nerve to prevent sorrow and disgrace from falling upon it. She knew that the crimes committed included both—that murder was a crime pursued by the vengeance of heaven! but, with the feelings of her country, she thought that, as what *was* done could not be *undone*, all that remained was, if possible, to prevent the innocent from suffering with the guilty.

"To think that the husband of my friend Marion M'Alpin, and the father of her children, should be hanged for such a dreadful thing, however much he may deserve it, is what I cannot bear to think of—disgrace never came near their door till now—and though I must sorrow for the innocent blood that's crying from the ground, I cannot help wishing, for the sake of

others, to screen him that spilt it from the punishment he deserves for more than that, though she that's away prayed that punishment might never light upon him."

With these feelings, Miss Ross, after having expressed her concern at the illness of Stoneyards, offered to remain with his daughter, and sit up at night if such attendance was necessary, as she well knew that the servants of the house were not equal to the care of an invalid. Jamesina, however, at present declined the proffered kindness, in the hope that her father would be better; and Miss Ross took leave with a strict injunction to send for her if she could be of use: she added, with an emphasis which left her hearer no doubt she knew all, "You know, for your mother's sake, I would willingly do anything in my power; and it is just as well to keep things among friends, as put ourselves in the mouth of the public at such a time."

"I well know your kindness for my poor mother," answered Jamesina, "and if he is not better to-night, I will send for you to-morrow morning." With this agreement they parted.

Jamesina had the satisfaction, in the course of the day, to see her messenger return with a satisfactory answer from Mrs. M'Askel, in the shape of an invitation for her uncle and his guests for the circuit ball, which she lost not a moment in forwarding to its destination, and soon had the additional pleasure to find it was accepted. She then sent Hugh to Fernbraes, as he was also included in Mrs. M'Askel's invitation, to tell her uncle that, as she understood from her sister that he and his visitors were going to Long Byars, and that there was so much company in the house that there would be no room for her, she would just stay where she was until his return, as Barbara was away, and that there was a hundred things for her to do.

Much pleased with the feasible appearance she had brought things to bear, she waited with impatience to hear that her uncle had actually set out before she sent for Dr. Wiley, and she told the servants about her "that, as her father still continued far from well, she would like to see their old doctor for her own satisfaction; but that, as there was not much the matter with him, she could not think of disturbing her kind uncle with it, and he busy with strange friends."

If her father recovered, she could tell this story to her uncle when he came back, and if he did not, she was certain he would not find fault with her then.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"In her native home
She dwelt, begirt with growing infancy,
But, behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an inquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears."

BYRON.

It may now be perhaps as well to retrograde a little in our story, and go back to the time of old Fernbraes's death, when Stoneyards had, as he said, become the executor to the estate. Several large sums of money had come into his hands, which he, without scruple, appropriated to his own use, as also a considerable remittance which Dr. M'Alpin had made for the purchase of some land contiguous to Fernbraes. Imme-

diately after the old gentleman's death, Stoneyards had ordered his bed, and the furniture of the apartment in which he had died, to be burned, upon pretence of his having died of a fever which was considered very infectious. Among the condemned articles was an ancient bureau, containing a variety of papers and documents which the executor thought would be better out of the way.

Old Madge McLean, the doctor's nurse, had always, since the death of his mother, remained with his grandfather at Fernbraes, and she, being constantly about his person in his old age, had been in the habit of seeing him deposite whatever he considered as most valuable in this bureau, and had opportunity to know that it contained papers of consequence to his grandson, as well as to be certain that there was nothing infectious in the illness which caused the old gentleman's death. She had stoutly contested the matter with Dr. Wiley, when, two days after the funeral, she had heard him, in compliance with Stoneyards' opinion, declare that the bed should be burned. She well knew that Stoneyards had passed the greatest part of the night there after the funeral dinner; she had her own reasons for supposing that the discoveries he then made were the cause of the unexpected order; and, at all events, before it was put into execution, she resolved to get possession of a bundle of papers which she had often heard her old master say "would be worth something to his grandson," and take the risk of any infection attending them. This she effected without suspicion, and, at the same time, laid her hand upon a letter addressed to the old gentleman, by which Dr. McAlpin made a remittance for the purchase he desired to make so near his paternal inheritance. The contents of the chamber were consigned to the flames, and, Stoneyards believed, to oblivion together.

Time passed on, and the desired purchase was never made by the executor, though such large additions were made to the sheepwalks at Stoneyards, that Madge's suspicions on the subject were turned into certainty. One day, when Mrs. Sinclair was regretting to the nurse that the lands of Braeton had not been purchased for her brother, though she had written to inform him as soon as they were likely to be in the market, Madge asked, "And did ye never hear your grandfather say, mem, that he had gotten a letter from my ain dear bairn?" a name by which she always called the child of her affection. "Did ye never hear that he had a letter, and money too to make the purchase? But he might have forgotten, that's true—he was so ill at the time it came."

"You must be mistaken, Madge, I never heard anything of the kind; and if it had been the case, I would surely have known it."

"Ye'll maybe think, mem, that I am taking too much upon me; but ye remember that I nursed you, and the dear bairn that's awa, and I may speak of things to you that wadna set others."

"You have no need to call all this to my mind, Madge, for I have never forgotten your kindness to me and my dear brother, or your attachment to our house. But what have you to tell me now, that you should think it necessary to bring it to my mind?"

"I bring it to your mind because I have to speak of them whose behaviour to you I am now well pleased wi', though ye never complain."

"That is a useless subject to talk upon, Madge, and had better be left alone. Tell me what you were going to say about my brother and the letter."

"I cannot do the one without the other, for I must speak of their deeds anent this job."

"Well, well, better let it pass. I'll bear the burden that God has seen fit to lay upon me."

"And a sore one it is, that's true. But it's no to vex you, or to notice what canna be mended," said Madge, with the liberty which her situation in the family gave her; "it's to serve your brother that I must speak now."

"Well, well, Madge, say on."

"Well, then, to tell ye the truth, I misdoubted the order for burning the things in your grandfather's room, and with your leave I took care to see what was in the black oak bureau first," and observing that Mrs. Sinclair was going to interrupt her, "but hear me to an end. It was no for ill that I did it, but because I had good reason to think it would be for his loss, and, sure enough, I was right. There I found this letter," producing that already mentioned, "in his own blessed handwriting, and in it ye'll see his orders to buy the Braeton—and ye'll find, too, that he sent the money to pay for the purchase when it was made, so that wasna what prevented it. When did he ever neglect to do anything that was right and becoming the blood that flows in his veins?"

Mrs. Sinclair took the letter, and, after she had read it, found that things were just as the nurse had stated them to be, and that it was really her brother's desire to have made the purchase she so much wished for him. "Stoneyards can never have known of this letter, Madge; and it is a pity that you did not produce it to him before the lands were sold to another."

"That's all, mem, that ye ken about the matter. It wasna that he didna ken of this letter that made him burn the bureau, but that he didna want that others should ken of it. I have reason to know that he garred auld Donald Fox, the factor, draw the money, though it went for other things than that it was sent for, and many another sum forbye, as thae papers will show."

Madge again produced the other budget which she had got into her possession, and which Mrs. Sinclair saw was in the handwriting of her grandfather, giving an exact statement of the ready money of which he died possessed.

"All this is very extraordinary, Madge," she said, "and must not pass in this way. It is dreadful to think that my poor brother, who has been toiling all his life under a burning sun, and banished, one may say, from all he loves best, should be stripped and plundered in this way by his nearest of kin! It is very extraordinary; but I will see into it, come of it what will. When I was the only sufferer, I thought it my duty to bear all without complaint; but no human being shall injure him, if I have the power to help it. Oh! if he could but know the life I have passed since he left me—but that is a thing he must never know. And now that we are upon the subject, Madge, and that ye have heard me say more than any mortal heard me say before—for no complaint ever passed my lips but what was made to my God—promise me, Madge, that you will never be the person to inform my brother of Stoneyards' behaviour to me."

"For your sake, mem, and for your brother's sake, what I know will go to the grave with me."

"Well, as that is settled, let us speak of what can be done to serve my brother now. You must

give me these papers, Madge, and I'll insist upon Stoneyards making restitution of such ill-got gear."

Stoneyards was at the time absent from home about the purchase of grazings which lay contiguous to his largest farm, and his poor wife, whose health was broken down by sorrow and ill treatment, suffered cruelly from the agitation of spirits caused by his protracted delay. The step she had determined upon taking was so contrary to her usual habits of meek suffering, that dread of the issue tormented her mind. She knew she had to deal with one who would not fail to use every advantage fortune had put in his power.

When he did return, she perceived, as soon as he entered, that something had occurred to please him in no common degree, though he strove to cover his exterior satisfaction with an air of chagrin: his deceit was too clumsy to deceive even those less accustomed to observe him. Mrs. Sinclair tried to discover what had happened, but he saved her the trouble, for he had no sooner thrown aside his riding-gear than he burst out,

"Here's a pretty story! Here's a bonny kettle of fish! What will Fernbraes say when he hears of this? And how I am to tell him is what I do not very well see."

"Tell me first," inquired his wife, "what you are speaking about, and then I shall be the better able to answer you"—not without a suspicion that some new plot was hatching.

"Have you not heard what is ringing through the whole country? Do ye not know that old Donald Fox is dead, and, what is the worst part for us, has died a bankrupt."

"I am sorry to hear of the old man's death, for it must have been sudden; and I am sorry to hear that his affairs are in such a bad state for his family—but I do not see how it can be of any consequence to my brother."

"No? when he had all his affairs in his hands—that is to say, whatever your grandfather left."

"My grandfather was not the man to leave his money in such a way; and you know, Stoneyards, and I know, that you have drawn everything out of Donald Fox's hands that might have been there, and I can bring proof, if such is wanted."

Stoneyards, at this, changed colour; his face became purple with rage; and he demanded, in a tone choked by passion, how she dared to know or think anything about matters which did not belong to her.

"It does not signify, Stoneyards, how I came to know it, but I do know it; and if you do not give me your promise to do justice to my brother, but persist in imposing such a story upon him, even at the hazard of cutting off my own children from his inheritance, because they are yours, I will do that sooner than let my kind and generous brother be duped and plundered by those who owe him so much."

Passion almost overcame Stoneyards at this resolute declaration, and, under its influence, he made a movement as if he would have annihilated the speaker on the spot where she stood; but, checking himself, and clinching his teeth, he stood for a moment looking at her, and then, in a voice hardly articulate from conflicting passions, desired her to consider well before she took any step, and not, by her folly, reduce her family to beggary.

"Ye would no like to see them reduced to that, would ye?"

"I have told you once, Stoneyards, and I tell you again, that no selfish consideration of what I or my family may suffer will make me stand tamely by, and see my liberal, my noble-minded brother robbed of his rightful inheritance."

"And is this your prudence—and is this your consideration for your family, madam?" demanded her husband, bitterly. "And if I did in my need apply a little of the money, which he can well spare, to my own use, must ye, by your presumptuous folly, bring him upon my back at a time when it would be ruin to me?"

"If that is the case, write to my brother fairly and honestly, and tell him what you have done, and I am certain that he will never trouble you about payment until it be convenient; but do not attempt to deceive him, or make him believe that what you have taken for your own purposes is lost in the hands of others."

"Ay, but it would settle the matter at once, without vexation to him, or trouble to me, and I would have nothing hanging over my head to pay at another time, when it may not be more convenient than it is now, and I could sleep in peace."

"Yes, if your conscience would let you; but mine will never let me rest under such a burden, and if you do not get rid of it by doing justice, I must."

"You have wrought yourself into such a fever about this silly business," said Stoneyards, with a malicious sneer, "that you had better go to bed now, and sleep it off if you can, and in the morning we shall see what is to be done."

"As you say, I am ill able to speak or think more on the subject; but I tell you fairly, that if you do not make James acquainted with what has passed, I shall."

"Ye shall do nothing of the kind," muttered Stoneyards between his teeth, as he went out of the room, and shut the door with a jerk after him, "if it is in the power of man to rule the will of woman or to tie her tongue. After all, there is but one way effectual, and that would be, if, when she went to her bed, she were never to rise."

This thought had no sooner presented itself to his mind than it seemed, by some strange fascination, to remain by him: he commenced to turn over the subject in his own mind.

"Her health is so bad, that her life cannot be long; it is impossible it can go beyond the next fall, and perhaps, her time is much nearer. She is as thin as a skeleton, and has such a cough, that it would be only saving her longer pain to quiet it altogether, and then this fashionable business would lie still with her. I wonder," he next thought, "what is in that cough-draught that the doctor sends; I might, I dare say, without any one's kenning a word about it, put something there that would do the business more effectually."

With this intention he watched the arrival of the doctor's messenger, and took the vial containing the draught from the hands of the maid who had brought it up stairs, and, carrying it into his own room, examined the bottle and the colour of its contents. Finding that it resembled laudanum, he threw out the draught and filled up the vial with that medicine, and then placed it where it usually stood.

What he anticipated happened; his victim, unable to sleep, called for her draught, and drank off the contents of the vial without discovering the deceit. Strong convulsions followed, and

her state became so alarming that it was evident she would not see the light of a new day. Madge M'Lean instantly despatched a messenger for the doctor, and Miss Ross, who was by the bedside of her suffering friend in time to receive her last directions. There she found Stoneyards, who seemed particularly anxious that his wife should not exert herself by attempting to speak, and often exhorted her to compose herself and try to get a little sleep.

It seemed that Mrs. Sinclair's mind was agitated by something more than her own alarming condition, and that her husband dreaded the disclosure she wanted to make more than the sudden catastrophe which was just at hand. Madge appeared impatient of the presence and interference of Stoneyards, and even ventured to say that her mistress would be much better if he would leave off speaking to her, and that, if he would go to his own room, she would call him if he was wanted.

Stoneyards was deaf to her remonstrances and proposals: he did not wish to quit his ill-fated wife while speech or recollection remained, and he only repeated his wishes that she would try and get a little sleep.

"If you were to take some of the laudanum, my dear, it would perhaps compose you."

The sufferer made no answer but by an averted motion of the head.

"Laudanum, say ye?" said Madge, bitterly; "I doubt but she has had too much already. I have seen laudanum in my day, and never saw much good come from it."

"What do you say, Madge?" inquired Robina; "surely, if she has had too much laudanum, the doctor should be sent for!"

"Never heed what Madge says or thinks," interposed Stoneyards; "ye may be sure, Miss Ross, that I sent for the doctor when I saw the melancholy state that my wife, poor woman, had fallen into; but I doubt it is past his skill, or any other body's to be of use to her now; but we must be resigned to afflicting dispensations when they come, Miss Robina; nobody kens better than yourself what this is to me—nobody better kens what a wife she has been, and what a mother—but we mauna repine, we mauna repine."

Stoneyards had taken the opportunity of old Madge's absence from the room to make this profession of his resignation. Robina, who saw that her friend's sufferings were increased by the mistake Madge had mentioned, left the room in the intention of sending Hugh to bring instant assistance to his mother. As she did so, the old woman returned with the laudanum-bottle in her hand, which she held up to Stoneyards, saying, with a look of keen scrutiny, "This bottle was full to the brim yesterday, as I had good reason to know; but see till it now—it's half empty and more—there is enough out of it to explain all this."

"As ye say, Madge," answered Stoneyards, with imperturbable effrontery, "there is too much out of that bottle, and I fear there is some mistake, though how it should come to pass is more than I can guess."

"But I can guess right well," answered Madge, fixing her sharp, keen eyes upon her master, or, rather, her mistress's husband, as she always called him; "I can guess right well—and it were well if the sheriff heard of it."

Stoneyards turned to an ashy paleness, though he opened his mouth to protest his ignorance of her meaning; at the same time, his wife held up

her hand, and made a signal for silence, while she said, in a feeble tone,

"Madge, for the love you bear to me and mine, never let such a word pass your lips, or such a thought enter your heart. What is past cannot be recalled, and my children must have one parent when they have lost the other. Madge, give me your promise that this goes no farther, that I may die in peace; and I call upon you to witness that I forgive whatever has been done against me, as I hope to receive forgiveness."

"And am I to see you murdered before my face?" answered the indignant old woman.

"And am I to see my dear bairn plundered and robbed in his rightful patrimony, and no say that ill has been done? And am I to see the root and branch of my auld and honourable master's family laid in the dust? and am I to tie my tongue and uphould them that did it? It's no in human nature, and it's no in mine."

"Madge M'Lean, you never refused my request, and you will not do so now—it is the last that I shall ever make of you—think of my children! you are not the person that would try to bring infamy upon their name. Promise me that for their sake and for my sake this will never go farther, and Stoneyards will promise to restore to my dear brother what is his lawful right; promise both before I quit this world, and keep the promise ye make, as ye look for peace here or happiness hereafter."

The promises thus solemnly required were reluctantly given, and Mrs. Sinclair, exhausted by the effort she had made, sank back upon her pillow, sensible that her end was approaching; she desired that her children should be brought to her, and that she should be left alone with them. Stoneyards, now satisfied that no confession to his prejudice would be made, was glad to quit a scene of patient suffering which touched even his hard heart with a feeling something like remorse.

Robina Ross watched by her poor friend while life remained, and readily gave the promise Mrs. Sinclair required, to assist and direct her children after life was gone. "You will be a mother to them, Robina, if they should ever need your care, and to the keeping of the God of love and mercy to whom I am going, I commit you and them."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Foul whisperings are abroad; unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles."

Macbeth.

STONEYARDS was not without hope that he might be able to enjoy the fruit of a crime which the death of his wife, and the promise she had exacted from Madge M'Lean, who was alone acquainted with the dreadful secret, would bury in obscurity; and he had afterward the effrontery, when talking with Madge, to affect to consider all which had passed at that time as the effect of delirium in the mind of his wife, and his passive acquiescence as an act of soothing compassion due to her distracted state.

Robina was but imperfectly acquainted with the circumstance which had led to the extraordinary kind of anxiety Stoneyards had manifested to prevent his wife from speaking when she had first been called to her bedside, and rather guessed than knew the motives by which

he was actuated; but she had seen enough to raise suspicions, and to increase, if possible, the dislike which she had always felt for the selfish and coarse habits of her poor friend's husband. She well knew that Mrs. Sinclair's life had been for years a scene of bitter trial, though it was a subject upon which she had never complained, even to her own mother, and now Robina could little bear Mr. Sinclair's professions of resignation, and still more hypocritical professions of sorrow. She suspected that his unjust dealings by his brother-in-law had been the means of shortening the life of his poor wife; but as her friend had said any inquiry into the case would only be to cover her family with disgrace, Robina resolved that no hint to their disparagement should pass her lips, or, if she could help it, no outward action of hers betray her inward feelings.

She was keenly alive to the sentiments of her country regarding family respectability; and though a good and a pious woman, thought it no harm to practise a little of the Jesuitical casuistry which upholds the respectability of family connexions, even at the expense of truth. Robina Ross would not have been guilty of falsehood for her own benefit, had her life depended upon its success; but to prevent talking about what would be injurious to the family of her beloved friend, and cause the innocent to suffer for the guilty, and bring odium upon an ancient and honourable name, was in her view of the matter quite another affair.

Old Madge M'Lean was better instructed in what had taken place, and even possessed proofs which she could bring into a court of justice, if need were; but she resolved, in conformity to her promise to her dying mistress, only to use them as instruments to force Stoneyards into compliance with his part of the agreement. She hated the man, and perhaps felt a sort of triumph in having such check over him; but, with the prudence peculiar to her character and country, she resolved to keep her own counsel, and take none into her secret unless such assistance was indispensable to compel Stoneyards to the restitution of embezzled property she was determined he should make. With this intent, after the death of Mrs. Sinclair, Madge made no farther comments even to Miss Robina Ross, who remained at the house until the last duties were paid to the companion of her youth. The old woman, with her own hands, laid out the body, and then called upon Stoneyards "to look on his work—and as sure as she lies there," she continued, "nothing but your restoring to Fernbraes what ye have unjustly kept from him, will prevent me from making this known to them that will see justice done. I have that in my power which will make that which passed in darkness as clear as noon-day."

Stoneyards again renewed his promise, frightened by a threat which he knew could be put into execution; firmly resolved, however, at the time he did so, to find means to evade its performance. "After doing so much, it will be hard," he thought, "if I am obliged to stop now."

It was observed from that day that old Madge M'Lean had an extraordinary influence upon Stoneyards, and that a word from her could rule him when none other dare to come near him. "She maun be a witch indeed to manage the like of him," said the servants; "the muckle-horned deil himself is no more camstrie than him in his tantrums." It was also observed

about the house "that auld Madge read written papers, and that, too, at unco' hours of the night; and that she was once seen with pen and ink in her hand, writing something which she hid the first moment that any one looked at her—no very good signs, as everybody knew—she spoke to herself, or maybe to them that wadna gie an answer in other folk's hearing; and wi' a word she garred the laird be still when he was raging about like a roaring lion, and she made him write in his counting-room, as it was plain to see, often against his will."

But from all these usurpations and strange ways, the house of Stoneyards was suddenly delivered. Old Madge went one day to the tryste of Drumillar, at twenty miles distance, and never came home. She was to have gone to her sister's, but there she never arrived. What had become of her none could ever learn. The servants, and, by their account, the neighbours, were disposed, as the most reasonable and probable opinion, to think "that she had just taken a trip on a broomstick across the seas to some of her old haunts, for it was weel kenned that she was over far-travelled and over book-learned for any honest woman, and everybody knew that the like of her had their own ways of ganging and coming, no like the rest of the world."

This solution was so satisfactory, that after waiting, and wondering, and conjecturing, old Madge shared the fate which awaits even those who occupy most of the public attention, and was gradually forgotten, notwithstanding her son's diligent search to discover what had become of her. Even he was at last forced to believe that she had been drowned crossing a small arm of the sea which lay in her route. The servants found a new subject of surprise, when, on Duncan's inspecting the little property and movables his mother had left behind her, no written papers were to be found: a circumstance only to be reconciled with her late studies by the very probable notion "that she had been called upon to deliver these writings to them wha sudna be named."

"Preserve us, sirs! is na it fearful to think of an auld crature like that working for sich maisters, and crossing the seas to do their bidding? it gars a very body's blood rin cauld to think of a' the words and the names that were in yon writings; but the deil and the pope they maun hae their ain agents, and them that serves the one or the tither of them daurna bide for time nor tide."

Stoneyards fully acquiesced in all these opinions, and thought that "the absence of such a 'dour wife' was no bad riddance."

After the old woman's disappearance, and after the commotion it excited had subsided, things went on in the old uniform way, only Stoneyards increased his stock, and had the reputation of being one of the richest men in the country; for, though his wealth increased, he never increased his expenses. In this way years ran round until the return of the laird of Fernbraes to take possession of his family estate, in all the added dignity of Oriental fortune.

Suddenly, as we have already seen, old Madge again made her appearance in her daughter's cottage at the Red Skeugh, and as suddenly vanished, without having had an opportunity to explain to Fernbraes a l. or any of the particulars of what had happened in his absence. We already know the trouble caused by this second disappearance, and the catastrophe to which it

led, and which now Jamesina thought was likely to come to a fatal termination for the house of Stoneyards. Could she but prevent the public exposure of what had been done, the crimes themselves, or the death of her father, seemed but a trifle in comparison. She at present fancied that his death would discover all, and shrunk from the idea of the shame his body's being refused Christian burial, as a murderer, would bring upon every one connected with him.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

As soon as Jamesina received information of the departure of her uncle and his friends upon their visit to Long Byars, she despatched a trusty messenger to the next borough town for her old medical attendant Dr. Wiley, as it was evident that her father's illness was now assuming a very serious aspect, and that, without surgical assistance for his wound, all that she could do would prove fruitless. She dared not commit to writing the necessity there was for the doctor's instant presence, but gave her messenger charge upon charge not to return without him.

After waiting for several hours in a state of increasing anxiety, she had the mortification to find that the doctor had been called to a distant part of the country before her summons arrived, and that there was no chance of his return until the following night, if he came then. In these perplexing circumstances Jamesina was forced to have recourse to the proffered kindness of Miss Ross, to whom she accordingly sent an earnest entreaty for her speedy presence. She felt that some explanation was due to Robina, and she tasked all her address to make it in the way most advantageous for her father. She dwelt much upon his misfortune in meeting with Duncan, and in his having been, in self-defence, compelled to act as he did. "Witness the dreadful wound which he had received, which threatened," as she told Miss Ross, "to be the death of him."

"Let us not speak of the crime, Jamesina, nor, if possible, think of it, unless it be to pray God that before he takes your father from this world, he would give him grace to repent what he has done. Nothing would make me act the part I am doing but to save the husband of my friend Marion M'Alpin from being hung for murder. I cannot bear to think of the stain, the disgrace, and the ruin this black business would bring upon her family if it came to light, and for that reason I will try to do what is in my power; but do not try, Jamesina, to justify what has been done, and never can be undone. Nothing, as I said before, would make me do as I am doing but the honour and respectability of an ancient family, which must not be lost because it has the misfortune to be connected with him."

"It is a thought like my mother's friend," said Jamesina, "and one she would thank you for if she were here to speak for herself. And your favourite too, Robina, my brother Malcolm, who is the soul of honour and spirit, as I have often heard you say, would never hold up his head after such a stain as this."

Miss Jamesina felt the prudence of bringing his name to the recollection of her coadjutrice, knowing that what regarded his wellbeing would determine her to proceed, however painful she

might find it. "Neither Fernbraes nor my dear Malcolm must ever know of this, nor ever shall, if I can be the means of preventing it."

Jamesina then explained the causes of severe alarm which she had on her father's account. She began to think that she had ventured too much in running the risk of letting him die for want of medical aid, and feared that the part she had taken in the whole matter would ultimately embroil her with her uncle.

"Though, after all, what could I do?" she continued; "my uncle, with his headstrong notions of right and wrong, would never, I doubt, have been brought by any reason upon earth to do what I wanted in a quiet way, and I was forced to keep it from him, and how it will."

"It would be more tormenting to his kind heart," said Miss Ross, "than you know of, Jamesina, therefore he must never come to the knowledge of this. The dead cannot benefit by what the living would suffer."

It was in this way that the worthy Robina Ross schooled herself into the performance of a part which, with all its attendant circumstances of concealment and management, she would certainly, in any other case, have considered as going "art and part" with the guilty.

Jamesina, in her statement, wholly suppressed the account of her own midnight encounter, and the means she had taken to cleanse her father's habiliments from the dreadful witness she had found upon them; and Miss Ross, who did not wish to retrace the horrid circumstance, never inquired.

The two ladies ascended to the apartment of the miserable culprit, and found him in the delirium of fever, muttering words which would have betrayed his part in the late proceeding to any one within hearing of their import.

Tormented by the goadings of his own evil conscience, he made desperate efforts to escape from the fiends whom he fancied were fastening upon him, and often struck with such violence at those whom he believed to be within reach, that the bed shook under his frantic efforts, and large drops of perspiration chased each other down his inflamed features.

To witness his desperation was an effort beyond Robina's strength, and she retired into an adjoining apartment, promising to watch that no person came up stairs while his fearful paroxysm continued.

Jamesina, whose harder strung nerves fitted her to endure all that did not include personal suffering, remained in his room, but seated herself in a corner out of his sight, as she observed that the presence of any one only exasperated his mind, and she quietly waited the exhaustion which she knew must follow such wearing exertion of body and mind.

For hours did Stoneyards continue to rave on in the same frantic manner, the violence of fever supplying his want of strength, and, in a manner, rendering him insensible to the acute pain of his wound, irritated by his fruitless attempts to escape from what he considered his place of punishment.

"What," he said, thrusting out his huge, brawny arm, on which the muscles were as strongly marked as on that of a blacksmith accustomed to wield the sledge-hammer, "what has this right hand done that I should have such a pain in it, and what has my brain conceived that it should burn as if the flames of hell were there?"

He struck his head violently with his clinched hand, and, tearing off the handkerchief which bound his head, showed his gray hair in melancholy contrast to his bloated countenance and glaring eyeballs. Even Jamesina's heart shrank when he violently drew back his dark-blue curtains, and exposed features working with every evil passion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. She hastily cast a shawl over her head, and drew herself farther back into her corner to escape the hideous sight.

He raved of her mother, of Madge, and of Duncan, and Jamesina was now convinced that another crime had been committed, of which she was, until then, ignorant, and no longer wondered at the uncommon agitation he had shown on catching a glance of her as she escaped into the apartment of her mother. But she was his *own* child; self-interest was her governing principle; and though she was frightened by such a disclosure, she was not to be daunted in the path she had marked out for herself, though, at the moment, she was thankful that Robina was not within hearing.

This violent access of fever passed, left the wretched sufferer in a state of exhaustion which resembled death; the colour, which violent irritation had inflamed to a crimson and purple tint, now ebbed from his stiffening features, and was succeeded by the clayey hue of suspending animation. He still breathed, but his eyes were closed, and his hands fell by his side; then his respiration became so very low that Jamesina went in quest of Miss Ross, thinking for a moment that it was finally suspended. That, however, was not the case, but it was plain to them both that the next return of fever would be the last.

"Could we not send for the minister?" inquired Robina; "worthy Mr. Playfair would, I am sure, give his word that this should go no farther."

"But it is useless now, Robina; he is past speaking; and if speech does return, it will no be with reason. There is no good in bringing Mr. Playfair here; but I think I had better send a line to my uncle and my sister, that he is taken suddenly ill, as it will have an odd appearance if he dies without their being informed of his sickness, and I really think it will be all over before my uncle can come here, so that it will be the safest in every way."

Miss Ross made no objection to what seemed so highly probable, but she earnestly wished for the presence of the minister; she was not without a tincture of superstitious dread at the idea of being without the support of a man of his sacred character at the time when such a soul as that of Stoneyards quitted its earthly tenement—not knowing, as she thought, what sorts of spirits might be in waiting for that time.

She recollected with a shudder that she had heard old Madge tell of a "man who, after having led a very wicked life, lay on a deathbed like Stoneyards, and that the strangest noises were heard about the house at midnight; just at the moment the breath quitted the body, a blast of wind blew open every door in the house, and put out every candle; that a noise of crackling was heard, as if something was ground to powder, and that, when light was procured, every bone in the dead man's body was smashed to atoms."

At another time Robina would not have laid much stress upon the truth of this history, knowing the taste of her country for the marvellous;

but now that her nerves were shaken by crimes which had passed under her own eyes, and that she felt her mind troubled by the sort of connivance she had given to them, this, and many a similar tradition, which she had been accustomed to hear from her youth, presented themselves to her mind with the force which every belief is always ready to usurp over weakened reason.

The certainty of a death was before her which even her utmost charity could not conceal from her was unblest, and at such a moment she would have given much for the society of any one upon whose religious feeling she could place dependance. She felt more forcibly than she had ever done before that Jamesina was not the person. "She has no thought but for the goods of this world; she lives but for its opinion and its honour; and if she can come out of this trouble without injury to herself in any of these things, she neither thinks nor cares for the poor sinner who is going to judgment without repentance and without forgiveness."

Overcome with this conviction, she burst into tears, and retired for a time to pour out on her knees the supplications which no human ear could hear, and which no human might could answer. She feared that she had done wrong in the sight of God; she feared that in saving the murderer from the broken law, she had but smoothed his road to eternal destruction, and she prayed for guiding grace, and for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit to direct her in the path she must tread. She felt that the time was now past when any action of hers could affect the wretched being for whom she feared she had incurred guilt, and she again took her seat near him, and watched by his distracted slumbers in a state of mind which it would be difficult to describe.

With his daughter it was different. Her sole interest was to preserve the silence so material to herself; and so long as there seemed a prospect of being enabled to do that, by any means whatever, the rest was to her comparatively immaterial.

With the uncommon share of prudent forethought which had always marked the conduct of Miss Jamesina Sinclair from her youth upward, and which every year, as it passed, brought to greater maturity, she considered that in the present desperate state of family affairs, it would be wiser for her to see how matters stood for her own interest, and to try if it were not possible to arrange them more to her satisfaction than she suspected was likely to be done by her eldest brother. She was well convinced that he would do nothing more than law compelled him: self was the ruling principle in his mind, if anything in his composition deserved to be dignified by such a name. He had all the ignorance and coarseness of his father, without any particle of his sagacity. Willing, therefore, to be, beforehand with him, she left Miss Robina by the invalid, and, taking up a candle, repaired to his private apartment, having first possessed herself of the keys, which her father always kept under his pillow. Carefully shutting the door, she proceeded to examine his drawers and private repositories, in which she discovered a considerable sum in gold and notes, probably the produce of his transactions with the butchers and sheep-dealers on the day of old Madge's disappearance.

Having particularly inspected the papers, and finding that there was no record of this gold

among them, she thought she might venture to remove it for her own use, and also the small notes; those of larger amount might, she thought, be registered, and probably traced; it would, therefore, be more safe not to meddle with them, and by pleasing her brother with the possession of such a large sum, keep him in good-humour, and prevent the inquiries which he would certainly make if there was nothing forthcoming.

"I have earned this," she thought, "by all that I have done for his honour and credit. It would be long ere he could do as much for himself, or any one else."

She was certain that Hugh could not be acquainted with the amount of what ought to be left by her father, as she knew that he never spoke of his money transactions to any one, and was accustomed, as often as his son asked for money, "to wonder where he expected to find it, knowing that he never kept a shilling more than was requisite for the maintenance of an idle, wasteful family, who put everything out, but never brought anything in." Besides, the people who had bought these large flocks of sheep of her father were, by the greatest luck in the world, south-country dealers, and consequently could not be there to answer any questions, even if it ever came into Hugh's thick head to make them.

Satisfied, from all these considerations, that her contemptible felony would remain a secret, she locked up everything as she found it, with the exception of the well-filled bag, which she carried to her own apartment, and deposited safely in a private receptacle, where she had always been in the habit of lodging such little savings and pickings as her own industry and good management put in her way. Sundry little surpluses of dairy and storeroom, converted into yellow gold, had been hidden in this snug depository until she found means to place them, by the agency of decent Mr. Shiftwell, old Donald Fox's head clerk, out on interest.

Jamesina would have given a great deal to have seen her present treasure deposited safely in his hands; but the present was not a time to bring him or any other body about the house, and she was obliged to conceal the money, and the anxiety it cost her, by going back to the bedside of her miserable parent.

The young laird from time to time made his appearance in the room, when his sister thought it safe to admit him; but, as such attendance was uncongenial to his habits and feelings, he never lengthened his visits beyond the time which was by decency required to ask how his father found himself.

In the low fits of her patient's fever, Jamesina also required, on different pretences, the presence of all the servants about the house, and would even let any of the neighbours who called to inquire for him come up to his room; but when the return of fever and delirium made such witnesses dangerous, she resolutely kept them out of the way, saying that the presence of strangers only induced him to fatigue himself by talking.

Notwithstanding all these precautions—and she left nothing undone that worldly wisdom could suggest—it was impossible that such an illness, at such a time, should pass without comment; and some of the neighbours, who were not obliged to Stoneyards' good offices, often "wished that all might be well, and that some things might no lie heavier on some people's consciences than a meal of ill-dressed meat on their stomachs."

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All these rumours and conjectures were, however, hushed by the death of their object. He expired during the night, in the presence of his household, and, worn out by what had already passed, without a struggle. In the morning Jamesina sent for two of the wives of old tenants of her grandfather, to whom she committed the care of the body, having first exacted a promise, upon oath, that they would never reveal the illness of which he died. This request she backed by a suitable present from her golden store. It grieved her to be under the necessity of breaking upon "an even sum," though prudence forced covetousness to confess that it was well spent as the seal of such an important transaction. "Had she but thought of this plan before, it would have saved her a great deal of needless torment when she first found that he could not recover, and feared discovery in consequence."

Satisfied now that all would be buried in his grave, she made preparations for the funeral with all becoming dignity. "Her brother Hugh," she told Robina, "was too much of a fool to be intrusted with anything, even though it so materially affected his own honour and credit in the world, and she was determined that, as he did not seem to have seen what had passed before his face, he should not, at all events, come to the knowledge of it by hearing."

Miss Ross, finding that Jamesina's mind was now relieved from all difficulties, and that she was quite equal to the discharge of the duties required of her, did not think it necessary to remain longer in a place where she suffered more than she thought herself called upon to bear, from witnessing the heartless cupidity of one child, wholly occupied with what had become his, and the cold indifference of the other, but poorly concealed under the veil of hypocritical sorrow with which she attempted to cover it. She therefore took her departure, and retired to her own solitary home to meditate at leisure upon what had passed.

Fernbraes had instantly, upon the receipt of his niece's note, mounted his horse to give her an answer in person, and arrived at Stoneyards just as the young laird was, with the assistance of the late Donald Fox's clerks, sending out letters of invitation for the funeral. Her uncle was as much shocked as surprised when he heard the sudden termination of an illness which he had been taught to consider as of a nature too slight to require his assistance. "How is it, Jamesina," he inquired, "that ye did not send before, or how is it that ye did not tell me your father was ill before I went upon this unlucky visit?"

"My dear uncle," replied Jamesina, "I never, no more than any other person, thought that the sore head he complained of was anything else than a headache, which sleep would take away; and even though he was no better the day ye went, but rather worse, I did not think it worth while to disturb you in the company of your friends, as he himself told me it was nothing; and as I knew that he was a strong man, and never had any sickness in his life, I could no dream of this, and I could no bring myself to think that there was anything in it till the time that I wrote to you; and then, though I had given him all the things that the "Domestic Medicine" recommends, a great book of my dear mother's, I saw that he was really sick, and I thought it best to send for you without losing another minute. Oh! that I had done it before! but I did all for

the best; but your presence was a blessing that I was not fated to have in my utmost need!"

Here the speaker thought proper to make such a show of violent sorrow, that her uncle advised her not to distress herself about what could not be helped, but rather to try and get a little rest after all the fatigue she must have suffered.

Jamesina did not here forget to tell her uncle that their kind friend, Miss Robina, had been with her all the time—a communication which she saw was agreeable, satisfied by any means to turn her uncle from inquiries which she could not answer. She had such dependance upon his kindness as to be certain that, if she appeared overcome with fatigue and suffering, he would cease to harass her with questions; and, in fact, she had suffered both in body and mind, though not from the feelings which she chose to assign. Her uncle, therefore, found no difficulty in persuading her to retire to her own apartment, satisfied that her two confidants would keep vigilant watch; while he, after having seen her there, returned to his own house, where his Lucknow friends were to follow him, as he had left Long Byars the instant he had received his niece's note, and ridden as fast as his horse could carry him.

Stoneyards had died without a will; consequently, the whole of his property, with the exception of a trifle, which, by their mother's marriage settlement, had been secured to the younger children, went to the eldest son.

When Jamesina had, by her uncle's desire, and her own inclination to be alone, retreated to her apartment, her active brain was in too great a state of fermentation to permit her to sleep, and she passed all the late events in review before her. "Since things were to be so," she thought, "it was no in nature that they could have happened so fortunately. Everything had taken place just as if she had had the ordering of it."

Nothing could be more lucky than Kelpfield's being out of the way at such a time; before he came back, the whole would be at an end, and the neighbours weary of speaking. She would then have nothing to do but attend to him; and if, as he had given her to understand, he was glad at the prospect of her brother Malcom's return—though, after what had happened before their eyes, who could count upon anybody's life, much less a sailor's at the sea?—she might then bring all her schemes to a favourable issue, and keep Farquhar Shiftwell in his own place; for, presuming upon his knowledge, he had," she thought, "seemed to have forgotten it lately."

"It's very provoking that I cannot do without him about this money; and he is so sharp, and knows so much already, and this sum is so big, that he'll have his own thoughts. At all events, I'll let it lie over until Murdoch returns, and if it is Mr. Ross of Kelpfield that puts it into his hands, he'll no dare speak nor think about it."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?"—*Macbeth*.

"Still overhead
The mingling tempest weaves its gloom, and still
The deluge deepens."—*Thomson*.

THE day for the funeral was dark and gloomy. Every appearance foretold a gathering storm,

the more disagreeable, as the burying-ground was at some miles from Stoneyards, and many of the company had come from a considerable distance. They were all to dine before setting forth to lodge the "laird, honest man," among his ancestors. His "kith and kin," to the tenth generation, or perhaps farther, were now collected, not to speak of the late reports which had been in circulation, but to celebrate the virtues of the deceased, first in old Port, of which every one allowed that he had been an excellent judge, and then in whiskey punch, until the object of their meeting was almost "clean forgotten," and by none more than his worthy successor Hugh, who had drunk so many bumpers in acknowledgment of the civilities conferred upon him and his house, and in honour of the memory of his late excellent father, whom the "Laird of Scrimpy Knowes" wished he might resemble, that it was not until he had been two or three times reminded of the lateness of the hour, by messages from his uncle, that, with the assistance of two of his cousins, who grieved to see him overcome with grief, he staggered to the gate and took his place as chief mourner in the sorrowful procession, which now began to reel from the house.

Fernbraes and Colonel Cheapstow had witnessed this dinner, an unwonted sight to both; but, not thinking it necessary to await the termination, which did not seem to be at hand, they had, on the "removal of the cloth," withdrawn from a party who seemed to feel their presence a restraint, upon pretence of inquiring for the ladies of the family.

Here Jamesina shone pre-eminent. Her sisters, to be sure, had their share of the affliction; but she had been the chief actor, and was therefore the person to be principally considered on the present occasion. All the ancient female relatives of the family had met to assist and console her, whose conduct they unanimously declared "was a *patron* to young women, and that he would be a lucky man who should be rewarded by such a wife."

Jamesina "bore her honours meekly," and "only sorrowed that her poor exertions should have been called for in such a way, and that her sma' endeavours had no a more happy conclusion. She had done nothing but her duty to the best and the kindest of fathers, and she would do it to the end, whatever it might cost her."

In the mean time she did not forget to help about the cake and sweet wine to the "kind friends who had come so far to comfort her; and she wished," shaking out her broad-hemmed cambric handkerchief, "that they might never have experience of what she suffered," though she "confessed that in the midst of her sorrow it was a pride and a pleasure, if anything could give her pleasure at such a time, to see so many respectable friends of her own family met to help her in her trouble, and honour him that was taken from them."

The ladies all rose to witness from a window the departure of "as bonny a burial," old Miss Nelly Sinclair declared, "as any one could wish to see; and the old Lady Druma'thing gave it as her opinion that, "though she had always thought the young laird one of the prettiest men in the country, she had never thought him so much so as just at that moment, when he was standing at his father's head."

The cavalcade passed on with as much order as the nature of circumstances would permit, though several of the sorrowing assistants had so much difficulty in keeping up with it, that the younger part of the company above stairs, who, from behind a window-curtain, witnessed their mazy progression, could hardly suppress an indecorous smile; conscious, however, of the impropriety of such an indulgence, they resisted the inclination, and before it had got farther than the corners of their mouths, buried it in their pocket-handkerchiefs; and, more effectually to assist them, the old ladies turned the conversation upon the will of the deceased. It was a subject, however, upon which none of his daughters were either able or willing to throw any light. "They depended upon the well-known kindness of their father and the generosity of their brother," and Jamesina "had no doubt that everything that ought to be done was done."

The last of the procession had disappeared, and the clouds, which the whole morning had seemed gathering for a storm, now began to emit signs of its approach; the wind rose with fury, and the distant thunder growled upon the blast; then the lightning, in quickened succession, showed that it rolled nearer. The funeral company struggled against the opposing elements, and continued to force their way up the glen, at the head of which was situated the churchyard to which they were going in defiance of the wind, which rushed through the narrow valley full in their faces. Hats, bonnets, and plaids yielded to the force of the blast, and the pall was even lifted from the coffin, and wrapped, by the violence of the wind, round the head of the young laird: an omen which most of the company witnessed with terror. Those nearest hastened to disengage him from the disagreeable encumbrance, which they in vain strove to replace in its proper situation.

In the midst of this tempest guns were heard from the sea, and Fernbraes, certain that they must be those of some ship embayed upon that rocky coast, urged forward the bearers (who could hardly make head against the wind's increasing fury) as fast as possible, impatient to be free to render the assistance of which he feared they stood so much in need. Exhausted by their efforts, though as many men as could get hold of the bier lent their assistance, and, baffled by the violence of the wind, they more than once fell under their burden, the bier was wrenched from their hands, and the coffin overturned upon the ground.

"This is one of the awfullest days in the memory of man," said Rory More, as he helped to replace Stoneyards on the bier from which he had been hurled; "that thing was dragged out of my hands wi' a wrench as a strong man wad break a rash from a bairn. His presence be about us! and the wind played skreigh in my ears at the moment the coffin was dung o'er, like the voice of a cratur laughing in mockery."

"Ochone! ochone!" muttered Hugh Glass, in answer to these observations, "it's sair wark and ill to bide; and, if a' tales be true, it's no like to be a lie that it wasna for naught the muckle fitstaps were seen on the sand wast by yonder, where thae cannons are firing even now. Hear to them, and see to the flash o'er the Fisher's Bank at the fit o' the Black Rocks. We'll hear

mair tell o' that ship afore it's night yet: it's no them that kens our coast that wad come within the Lang Reef and the main, and it's no them that does it that will stand to sea again, or my name is no Hugh Glass."

Fernbraes continued to urge forward the procession. "Let us, my good friends," he said, "without dishonour to the dead, haste and give what assistance we can to the living—change the bearers, and try to get on before it is too late."

Willing to oblige Fernbraes, whom every man in the country considered as a true shoot of the old stock, as well as anxious to render the assistance which they were sure was much wanted, they renewed their exertions, and, after a hard struggle against the weather, reached the top of the glen, which commanded a view of the sea through an opening in the rocks by which it was bounded.

A ship was distinctly seen in a very hazardous situation, between the outer reef, which was now under water, and the inner, called the Black Rocks; she seemed to have dropped all her anchors, to prevent, if possible, her going on shore, but it was clear, from the guns she continued to fire, that those on board agreed in opinion with those on shore, that in such ground it would be impossible to hold, and that in a very short time the cables must yield to the rocks upon which they were sawing.

Fernbraes gave orders that only as many men as were required to assist in laying Stoneyards in the earth should remain with him, and that the rest should repair to the seaside with ropes, and whatever else might be necessary, to assist those in peril, promising that, as soon as his present duty was performed, he should follow them with the rest. This command was cheerfully obeyed by all his own people, who were much more ready to yield what assistance was in their power, than to stay and witness what was to come of this unblest funeral.

The body was no sooner lowered into the grave than it was covered by earth and sand heaped upon it by the wind, while the next moment swept it off and left the coffin bare; and it was not without much exertion that soil enough could be accumulated to hide it from the eyes of those who almost expected to see it get up and stand on end.

When the task was accomplished, and stones were laid down to protect the loose sand from the violence of the tempest in that exposed situation, every one left the spot, glad even of the prospect of present danger to turn their thoughts from a subject which had more or less affected every one present.

Many of the relations of the family had come from considerable distances, and were therefore obliged to return to their own homes before darkness increased the danger of the road in such weather, and Hugh Sinclair was too much overcome by his exertions and dinner together to be of the least use; his uncle therefore advised his returning to take care of his sisters, and satisfying them that no accident had happened.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than heaven;
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dress refined and clear,
A tear so limpid and so meek
It would not stain an angel's cheek,
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a dutiful daughter's head."

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

FERNBRAES, with the servants, tenants, and fishermen who had attended the funeral, took the short cut across the side of the glen down to the sea, losing every recollection of him whose unchristian burial they had just witnessed in anxiety for the fate of those before them.

As they had anticipated, the vessel parted one of her cables, and swung round by her bows in wild circuit; her deck, now distinctly seen, notwithstanding the gathering twilight of a stormy night, was covered with men, all seemingly watching the dread moment when the breaking of their single remaining stay would cast them in fragments on the shore. To launch a boat to their assistance was impracticable from the state of the weather, but the hardy fishermen hastened to provide whatever they thought might be useful.

Their suspense was not of long duration: a furious blast, rolling a tremendous surge before it, heaved the vessel on its foaming head; their only remaining hope—their last cable, parted, and the ship, whose keel almost seemed to start out of water, shot forward on the breast of the wave like a mighty animal making a desperate leap, and thundered down on the extremity of the rocky reef in a thousand atoms. The change was as instantaneous as it was awful: an instant before, the gallant vessel had come forward in magnitude and force which seemed to defy opposition; now she lay a mass of floating, shapeless fragments hurled on the coast. The shrieks of the sufferers were lost in the thunder of her dissolution, which left not two planks joined together.

To disentangle the seamen from the wreck with which they were overpowered was the first care of those who stood ready to yield their assistance as soon as it would be available; those who were thrown near enough to the shore to be within reach were instantly drawn up before the returning surge could sweep them back. The fishermen, perfectly acquainted with the rocks, searched along the cliffs, and into every corner where they thought the surf could have washed up a human being.

Fernbraes, in anticipation of what was likely to happen, had, at the commencement, despatched a special messenger to Mrs. Corbat, desiring that she would take care to send all the carts in the yard with straw and blankets, and, as soon as they arrived, he caused the wounded sufferers to be placed in them. Fortunately, the storm had now spent its fury, and the decreasing violence of the surf permitted greater exertion to be made for the rescue of those who were still missing. The captain of the vessel was among those who had been thrown upon a sandbank, whence he was drawn without injury, and now actively assisted in the endeavours that were making to collect his people, and ascertain how many yet were wanting. Two only were actu-

ally dead, though many were so severely mutilated that their lives were in danger.

Dr. M'Alpin stood by the vehicles to see the wounded properly placed as they were brought up. "This seems to be a gentleman and an officer," he observed to Hugh Glass and Rory More, as they carried up the body of a man between them.

"It's like he may, sir; but, whatever he is, I fear he has gotten his death-cleek on the rocks."

"I trust not," said the doctor, examining a large wound near his temple which bled profusely; "he is only stunned by the blow, and will, I hope, soon be able to answer for himself: put him into that litter, and let him instantly be conveyed to Fernbraes. Captain," he continued, addressing the commander of the vessel, "can you tell me if we have all your men here now? as, the sooner we get some of them into a place of rest, the better. How many passengers had you?"

"Three," answered the captain.

"I hope there are none of your fine fellows lost."

"No," replied the commander, after inspecting the carts, and speaking with those who were wringing their clothes on the beach; "none but the two killed, and a passenger, Lieutenant Sinclair, of his majesty's navy, who is missing."

"Sinclair!" shouted the doctor, in a voice which electrified every one present; "not Lieutenant Malcolm Sinclair?"

"The same, I take it, sir, lately returned from St. Helena."

"Hear me, men of Fernbraes!" said the doctor; "Malcolm Sinclair is missing this night; and if there is one hears me that ever loved the name of M'Alpin, help me to recover my sister's son!"

Fernbraes, in agony of mind, returned to the foot of the rocks, while the bold fishers, regardless of personal danger for the youth whom they all knew and loved, dragged down a boat and launched her in the surf.

"Stay, Fernbraes, stay!" said Rory More, as his master attempted to go into the boat. "What are you going to do? Let me take that place, and dinna run the risk of our losing two at once."

Colonel Cheapstow had, with Niel Ronaldson, taken the way to the extremity of the reef; every spot was examined, every fragment of the wreck was overturned, but without effect.

"Sinclair!" shouted the colonel; but they received no answer.

A flash of lightning at that moment discovered an insulated rock at some distance, on which they plainly perceived the figure of a man. "There is Sinclair!" cried Colonel Cheapstow to his friend; "I know him in this light."

"God be praised!" exclaimed his uncle; "he is safe!"

The whole party joined to raise a shout together, which, it seemed, reached his ears, for the next flash discovered that he made a gesture in answer. The wind had now fallen so much that the fishermen thought they could without danger go to the rock upon which he was, and his uncle, relieved from anxiety on his account, remembered those whose state required his assistance.

"Now that he is in safety, Cheapstow, for I can see from his action my boy is unhurt, I

shall follow the wounded, and leave you to bring him home."

"Right, my good friend. I give you my word to bring him back in safety."

"There is not a man here that would not sooner lay down his own life than that harm should come to a hair of his head," said half a dozen voices, speaking at once.

"God bless you, my friends," said the doctor, mounting his horse; "do your duty, and let me do mine."

In his own avenue he overtook the litter upon which the wounded officer was conveyed, who, as he had prophesied, had in some degree recovered from the stunning effects of the blow he had received upon the rocks. Intimation of what had happened had preceded the sufferers to Fernbraes, where preparation had been made to receive them, and a large barn arranged for the seamen.

As soon as they reached the door, Mrs. Cheapstow and Eleonora came down to render their assistance. Fernbraes explained in a few words what had happened, but did not mention his nephew. "Here, Eleonora," he said, "watch by this gentleman, who is severely hurt, but not dangerously wounded, while I go into the house to get a cordial to counteract the faintness which loss of blood has brought upon him before we move him."

Eleonora, as she was bid, took her watchful stand by the litter, and one of the people, holding up a light, threw a ray on her face as she was bending down to see if her charge had fainted: he opened his eyes, and fixed them with earnest gaze upon her.

Eleonora drew back abashed. "Who are you?" he asked, in a faint voice, "and whence do you come?"

Startled by the seriousness of the question, she answered frankly, "I am Eleonora Cheapstow, and I come from Madras."

"Your name is Eleonora, and you come from Madras! but where are your parents? Was that your father?" he asked, with great emotion.

"No," said Eleonora, "I have no parents."

"Answer me, for the love of Heaven," said the wounded man, solemnly; "who were your parents? What was your father's name?"

"That I never knew," she answered, with the same earnestness. "I am a foundling, brought up in the Orphan Hospital at Madras."

"Then you are mine!" he said, stretching out his arms, and folding her to his bosom. "You are my lost child, the daughter of my Eleonora. My heart cannot deceive me. I see her features, such as I first saw her, and I hear her voice in yours. Oh, my child, my long lost child!"

"My father!" she said; "may I say father?"

"Stay, Eleonora, stay!" interrupted Mrs. Cheapstow; "let us be more certain before you give way to an idea which may only prove a disappointment to both."

"Impossible, my best friend!" answered Eleonora, "impossible that I can be deceived; he is like what I recollect of my father."

"What have I not suffered! and the impossibility of hearing of you, my child, increased it. But it is passed, and I am overpaid. Tell me all that has happened to you, and how it is I find you here."

"Not now," said Dr. M'Alpin, interposing; "all that will be for another time. She was lost and is found; for I cannot doubt more than yourself that she is your child. Let that satisfy you, and think of yourself for this night only, and to-morrow you may be in a condition to hear all that you wish to know. We must now get you to your apartment."

The servants took up the litter, and began carrying it up stairs.

"Eh, Malcolm!" he continued, as his nephew ran towards him; "you are welcome home, my boy."

"I have brought him, you see," said Colonel Cheapstow, "as you desired, safe and sound."

"I am not born to be drowned, my dear uncle," said Malcolm, gayly, returning his uncle's cordial grasp. "I am too much a child of the sea, though we have come off better than I expected. But how are all at Stoneyards?"

The question brought back to his uncle's mind all that had passed there, which the latter events, infinitely more interesting, had chased from his recollection; but he did not think the present a time for communications, and only answered, "Your sister is there at present, but do you know you have other friends here?"

Malcolm did not hear the query, for, catching a glimpse of Eleonora's dress, as she followed the people who carried her father up stairs, he ran into the house before his uncle had done speaking. "Eleonora! Miss Cheapstow!" he said.

She turned at the sound of his voice. "Oh! Mr. Sinclair, how happy I am to see you!" She extended her hand and burst into tears, overcome by what had just passed, and the recollection of Malcolm's kindness at a time it was so much required. "I have found my father, Mr. Sinclair, and I am so happy that I cannot speak."

Malcolm found no difficulty in expressing the pleasure this unexpected meeting was productive of to him, and how much he rejoiced in the discovery she had just made.

"I do not intend to give up my claims, mind ye, Eleonora," said the doctor, following them; "I loved you, from the first minute I saw your sweet face, with the affection of a parent, and though ye have found another, I will still keep my place; and if I am not much mistaken, Eleonora, I am not the only one in this house that desires to prefer claims to your regard, though they may not all be so disinterested."

Eleonora did not think it necessary to hear this last sentence, but followed her father into his room.

"Whatever claims a poor lieutenant in the navy might have the presumption to entertain," said Malcolm, with his usual sincerity, "may not be listened to by one who cannot be blamed for prizing his new-found treasure too highly."

"We shall see," answered his uncle.

"Did I not hear Mr. Sinclair's voice?" said Mrs. Cheapstow, coming from the drawing-room.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Cheapstow, here he is, at your service," answered Malcolm, springing up two steps at once to meet her.

"Come with me, and tell me all you know of this gentleman, who turns out to be Eleonora's father. He was a passenger in the vessel with you, was he not?"

"Yes; but illness prevented our meeting until an hour before our unlucky landing; but, from the little I did see of him, and his conduct in danger, he seems worthy to be Eleonora's father."

Malcolm left Mrs. Cheapstow to go and look after the men below, while his uncle dressed the wounded stranger, and made him over for the night to the care of Kate Roy, who watched by his bed, and had strict orders from her master to avoid speaking a word more than was necessary.

As Dr. M'Alpin was quitting the apartment of the wounded gentleman, he was met by Cussim Ali, coming up at a quicker pace than he had ever been known to use, to say that among those saved from the wreck he had found out "Manning Sahib, who save me from drown to desert island."

"Manning! Is it possible?" said the doctor; "how came he here without my discovering him at the rocks?"

"He not hurt, and you so busy with wounded sahib, you not see in dark night. He come away to rest what time Colonel Sahib stay to master's nephew."

"Very likely, Cussim, very likely; but where is he? Go and tell him that I will be with him the moment I have done with the poor fellows below."

Dr. M'Alpin saw that everything was done for the comfort of the wounded, and provision made for the wants of the rest, before he thought of indulging his own desire to shake hands with Manning, to whom he considered himself so much indebted. When he had left his patients to their repose, and seen the bountiful provision Mrs. Corbat had made for the rest in honour of Mr. Malcolm's arrival, he returned to his friends above stairs, and found Manning giving Colonel Cheapstow a history of all that had befallen them since their quitting the island.

"To see you here to-night, Manning," said Dr. M'Alpin, "is an unexpected pleasure. You are heartily welcome to Fernbraes. My poor fellow, whose life you saved, was the first to find you out by grateful instinct. I am rejoiced to see you among us."

"May every seaman, sir, after such a voyage as we have made, find such a port to anchor in! This is different from the Andamans."

"Mr. Manning, let me present to you my nephew—my adopted son. Malcolm, let me introduce you to a friend to whom I owe the life of my poor Cussim Ali."

When the doctor next morning visited his patient, he had the satisfaction to find him greatly recovered from the effects of last night, and did not, therefore, think it necessary any longer to deprive him of the company of his daughter, which he so much desired: he felt a deep interest in whatever concerned his new inmate—more, he confessed to Mrs. Cheapstow, than he could well explain, even from the strange circumstances of their first meeting.

"If I were a Hindoo, now, I should think that we had been friends in some previous state of existence."

"Or that you will be for time to come, which will answer the purpose equally well, M'Alpin," joined Colonel Cheapstow.

Eleonora spent the morning with her new-

found parent, and gave him a faithful account of her life, from the reception at the Orphan School at Madras until the present time. Though she sat by him, she was looking down, too much occupied in giving him the satisfaction he desired to observe the effect some of the names in her narrative produced upon her father. When she had finished, Eleonora left him to think over all that she had been telling him, and to compare the unlooked-for events which had effected their union.

The happy party at Fernbraes was next morning increased by the arrival of Miss Robina Ross from Kelpfield, who, having heard of last night's disasters, rode over to offer her assistance to the doctor, or personal attendance, if it was requisite, for his patients. While they were talking of the wounded stranger, and the discovery he had made in Eleonora, the door opened, and the very person in question walked into the room, "feeling himself," as he said, "so much benefited by a good night's rest, that he could not restrain his impatience to make his thanks personally to their kind host, and those to whom he was so much indebted."

Robina Ross started at the first accents of the stranger's voice, and her colour went and came: looking steadfastly on him, she said solemnly, "It is not possible—the grave cannot give up the dead; and yet I cannot be mistaken in the sound of my brother's voice, or in the glance of his eye, though it is hollow, and sunk, and changed."

"No," said the stranger, extending his arms as he advanced towards her, "no, Robina, you are not deceived, and I have yet a sister."

"Kenneth Ross!" exclaimed the doctor, starting upon his feet as nimbly as his nephew could have done; "have I found my first and my dearest friend yet in the land of the living!"

"James M'Alpin," said the colonel, grasping his hand, while he held his sister to his bosom, "this hour is the reward of years of slavery and exile; but where is my child! that I may present her to my sister and my friend by the name she has a right to bear. You, Colonel Cheapstow, and you, madam," he continued, addressing Mrs. Cheapstow, "your generous hearts can conceive the pride and the pleasure I feel in presenting such a child to such relatives—to you I am indebted for this blessed hour."

"All this is well, my friend, excellent well," said the doctor, recovering from the transport into which such a scene had thrown him; "but I shall not throw away my authority as doctor, nor permit conversation which may undo all the effects of last night's rest. I am grown authoritative, Kenneth, since you knew me, and I desire that all expressions of gratitude and happiness should be reserved until you are more fit to make them. Our Finnan haddocks are cold, Cheapstow, and the broiled moorfowl not worth the trouble of eating."

While Colonel Ross, his sister, Mrs. Cheapstow, and their host, enjoyed their own quiet conversation; while Colonel Cheapstow and Manning walked down to the beach to inspect the scene of last night's wreck; and while Malcolm and Eleonora, by Dr. M'Alpin's desire, rode over to Stoneyards to inform Jamesina of all that had happened, we may as well take the opportunity of their occupation to look back on the

history of Colonel Ross, and spare him the trouble of telling it himself.

CHAPTER XL.

"Daughter of Jove! relentless power,
Thou tamer of the human breast,
Whose iron scourge and torturing hour
The bad affright—afflict the best!
Stern, rugged nurse! thy rigid lore
With patience many a year he bore;
What sorrow was thou bad'st him know,
And from his own he learn'd to melt at others' woe."

GAY.

The History of Kenneth Ross, of Inchbraken.

KENNETH ROSS at an early age had entered his majesty's service, and, upon his promotion to his majority, had, with his regiment, embarked to the East Indies, where he was accompanied by his wife. After a few years their happiness was increased by the birth of a little daughter, but her mother's constitution, naturally delicate, sunk from that time. Her medical attendants ordered instant return to Europe, but she could not bring her mind to think of quitting her husband, and depriving him of the society of both herself and his infant; she hoped that change of air among the hills, to which they were ordered, might be all that was requisite, but the event turned out contrary. She died at an out-station just when her husband had received orders to join his regiment previous to their embarkation for Europe. Colonel Ross, therefore, with his little girl, then between two and three years of age, attended by his faithful servant, Joe Henderson, for the little Eleonora's nurse had died at the same station with her mistress, and in such a country it was impossible to replace her, recommenced their long march to the Presidency.

As they were to pass through an insulated country, Colonel Ross thought it prudent to have a strong guard; but, notwithstanding this precaution, they were, on the second day, suddenly attacked by a party of wandering Arabs, who at that time infested the country, carrying fire and sword wherever they made their appearance.

Joe Henderson was knocked down in the commencement of the fray, and lay stunned upon the ground, how long he did not know; but when he recovered from the effects of the blow, he found that the field had been fought, and won, he had no doubt, by the Arabs, from the number of Colonel Ross's guard whom he found extended there; but, after the most minute search, he could not discern any traces of his master, nor those whom he had every reason to believe were the conquerors. All the busy combatants had gone from the field, and his natural conjecture was, that the Arabs had carried the day, and decamped with their booty. Searching among the short jungle a little off the scene of combat, he discerned the palanquin in which his master's child had been carried, overturned in the grass, where the bearers, in their fright, had thrown it. Fortunately, the child had received no injury, and had been preserved from danger by her inability to get out of the palanquin, which lay sideways. Having satisfied himself that his master was not to be found, Joe took up his young charge, and pro-

ceeded with her as fast as he could to rejoin his regiment. He carried the child in his arms, as, in such a part of the country, it was impossible to look for palanquin-bearers, even if he had had money to pay them. He had an immense and toilsome journey to make, and, as we have already seen, succeeded in carrying the child safely to Madras, though his own life was the sacrifice of his faithful discharge of his duty.

Colonel Ross, in the short and desperate encounter with the Arabs, had been wounded in the sword-arm, and made prisoner: the first intention of his captors was to strip and hang him upon the next tree; but the sight of a troop of Company's cavalry coming on at full speed in pursuit of them, caused them to alter their intention, and fly without losing an instant. The Arab chief threw Colonel Ross across the pommel of his saddle, in the idea that it would be better to keep him for a ransom, as his dress showed that he was an officer of rank, than put him to death upon the spot, as had been his first intention. They fled on the wings of fear, and for twenty-four hours continued their speed, without once stopping to look back, along paths, over rocks and precipices, where it would have been difficult for a goat to follow; but their horses, accustomed to the wildest routes and the most continued exertion, without other refreshment for hours together than opium fastened to the bits of their bridles, were capable of fatigue beyond the rest of their species.

Their unhappy prisoner had, during this tremendous ride, experienced torments which it would be impossible to describe: tied across the saddle, his feet hanging on one side and his head on the other, every variety and every alternation of physical suffering had been his; and when the troop at length halted in an arid spot, surrounded by bare rocks, his barbarous conductor loosed the rope which bound him, and threw him to the ground as a dead body with which he had needlessly encumbered his good steed and polluted himself; but, since the penalty was incurred, he thought he might as well seek some indemnification.

"Death has taken our prey out of our hands," he said; "there is no ransom for this man," at the same time dismounting and proceeding to search the body.

He took possession of Colonel Ross's watch and cut off his epaulettes, as being the only property which could be of use to him. He sought for money, but sought in vain: had he been better acquainted with the habits of Europeans, he would have known that none ever carry a purse who are above the necessity of paying for their daily wants with their own hands. The clothes of his prisoner were, in the eyes of the almost naked barbarian into whose hands he had fallen, perfectly useless; he therefore did not think it worth while to strip him, or to take anything for his own use but his sash and his pocket-handkerchief, which he bound round his head.

Polluted by contact with the dead, he was unable to eat with his comrades, and was obliged to remain apart until he should find water to cleanse him from the stain. The troop had retired to a little distance from the spot on which an object so abominable in their idea infested

the air, and loosed their jaded horses to pick such withered grass and burned shrubs as the place afforded, while they ate their parched corn, and then laid themselves down under the starry cope of heaven to sleep until the cool air before daylight should permit them to proceed. They had now got into a country where they did not dread pursuit from the Company's troops; but, as their hand was against every man, they knew that the hand of every man was against them.

When Colonel Ross recovered from the state of insensibility into which he had fallen during his dreadful ride, and found that he was quite alone, he easily conjectured what had happened: unacquainted with the habits of those into whose hands he had fallen, he wished to ascertain if they had actually left the ground before he made any movement; he soon found, from the noise of their horses, that they were still there, and determined to lie still until their departure, as the most certain means of escaping their vigilance. Should any of them return to the spot, as it was not improbable they might, and miss him from the place, he knew that instant and minute search would be made, which his ignorance of the country must certainly lead to his discovery; but if he remained quiet as they had left him, the idea that life was gone would effectually protect him from the inspection which could make them discover their mistake. He had reason to be satisfied with his own determination; for, before recommending their march, two of the gang came towards him in the clear moonlight.

"We shall see," he heard them say, "if the European is really dead, or if he has only fallen into a swoon from carrying his head in a different way to what he ever did before in his riding."

"There he lies," answered the other; "death has done his work; and our brother, since he was polluted by carrying the infidel, did not forget to pay himself for it."

They spat to avoid swallowing the air tainted by such impurities, and retraced their steps to where their brethren in arms were mustering and mounting their horses.

As soon as Colonel Ross lost the last sound of their unshod feet, as they fled through the straight and rocky valley into the open plain beyond, anxious to cross it before daylight should discover them to the eyes of those who might have heard of their exploits, being certain that they were actually gone, he went to the spot where they had passed the night, eagerly collecting the few grains of dried corn which had fallen from their spare repast. There were no signs of human habitation to be discerned, nor any indication of a road save the track of the robber Arabs. Supposing it possible for him to follow such an uncertain indication, often lost in the nature of the soil over which they had passed, he must die of want, if he were not, which was more probable, the prey of wild animals. To get down into the plain, in the hope of being able to fall in with some cavalcade of travellers, was his only resource; but his suspense was soon brought to a close. When day dawned, he saw a body of horsemen approaching by the same road by which his captors had come, and from their wild and warlike appear-

ance he had too much reason to fear that they were another party of the same gang, well knowing that many such were roving over the northern provinces of India, where the unprotected state of the country, its difficulty of access, and their own numbers, promise them plunder with impunity.

He looked anxiously round for some means of concealment, but the narrow, stony ravine in which he found himself did not afford means of concealment or escape, and before he could even make trial of the only projecting point sufficient to shelter him, he was marked by the keen eyes of those accustomed to the range of birds of prey, and seized in an instant. Fortunately, he had sufficient acquaintance with their language to be able to answer the questions they put to him, and to account, in a manner which they deemed probable, for his being discovered in such a situation.

For a few minutes they deliberated among themselves what should be his fate: some were of opinion, like their predecessors, that instant death was the safest measure—"dead men give no information;" but others, considering that he was a man in the prime of life, prudently calculated that his price as a slave would be at least worth the risk and trouble incurred in taking him along with them. Decided on this important point, they gave him a portion of the dry grain which they carried for their own use, as they were unwilling to reduce his value by famine.

Colonel Ross tried to make them understand that, if he were well treated, and if they would undertake to send a messenger into the company's provinces to negotiate the transaction, they should receive a ransom for his freedom more considerable than any price they could expect by selling him to slavery. This was a risk, however, they were not willing to run: any business of the kind must be done in writing, and that, too, in a language of which they were ignorant, and, consequently, could not detect the information it was, perhaps, intended to give. They therefore persisted, notwithstanding all his entreaties, in adhering to their own plan of selling him for a slave whenever a purchaser should offer.

With this intention they mounted him upon the spare horse of one of their comrades who had fallen in their last rencounter, and tying his feet under the animal's body, placed him in the centre of the troop, with positive injunctions, on pain of instant death, to refrain from thinking of escape.

In this way they continued their march for several weeks, never intermitting the same vigilant precautions; they travelled in the night and rested during the day, to prevent discovery, as they were returning with the fruits of a successful campaign, and unwilling to run risks where they had more to lose than it was probable they could gain. In vain Colonel Ross offered any bribe for means to transmit a letter regarding his child to his friends at Madras—his words were but promises—he had no money to dazzle the eyes of the faithful, and the single circumstance of their being unable to read what should be written, weighed more with their suspicious watchfulness than even the promised gold with their knavish cupidity.

Tormented by anxiety for his child, Colonel Ross next endeavoured, by every means in his power, to win some of the party, or interest any one in his fate; but his efforts were lost upon ignorant, hard-hearted barbarians, whose dreadful life accustomed them to every form of human suffering. To most of them, indeed, the humiliation of a European was a sight of triumph, and they did not spare to increase the real misery of his situation by every petty aggravation in their power. They gave him water to drink which they had purposely defiled, and took pleasure in initiating him in the hard duties of slavery, by making him perform the most menial offices for the troop.

Those who have experienced the heaviest misfortunes of human life know that it is sometimes more easy to bear the most afflicting dispensations which seem to come direct from the hand of God, than the malicious and irritating contrivances of man's inhumanity: corroded by unmixed bitterness, the mind is apt to fret itself against the injustice of human kind, forgetful that an all-seeing God uses in his wisdom the instruments of punishment most necessary for the correction of dispositions which only He can appreciate in their length and breadth.

Colonel Ross, in the pride of his independence, was made to taste the gall of subjection to the will of an insolent and audacious banditti, the meanest of whom did not hesitate to strike him on the face, bound and unarmed as he was, when he in any way thwarted their savage will. The very desperation of his circumstances brought him to consider his own existence—its end and object, and to look into his own heart in a way which had never before been necessary to his peace. When surrounded by the blessings of life in rich profusion, the Giver had been shut out from his sight by the magnitude of his own gifts; but, now that they were recalled, and that the scene of this world's comforts were stripped and bare, he saw beyond it; and his mind, no longer satisfied with a vague idea of God's general providence, sought to realize his directing hand in all that had overtaken him. The belief that the bitter draught was sent by Him who afflicts in mercy, who permitted not the cup of suffering to pass even from his own Son, as it opened upon his mind, took from his situation the sting which would otherwise have made him seek death to escape from the miseries and humiliations of a life too grievous to be borne.

Those who have met with cruelty, injustice, scorn, and oppression, can best imagine the first swellings of a generous and independent heart, pressed down by the trials which beset Colonel Ross; but, desperate and hopeless as they seemed, he called up every right principle in his mind, and every energy in his nature, to support what he could not combat; for he soon plainly perceived that all idea of escape must be given up as useless. His guards watched with vigilance which nothing could impair, and, had it been possible to elude them, the nature of the country into which they had carried him would only have made his death the more certain.

They had now crossed the Indus, and were advancing by rapid marches to the great desert on the boundaries of Persia, where they fell in with a large caravan of merchants and travellers

taking advantage of their protection. To think of offensive measures was impossible against such well-armed adversaries; the troop therefore disposed themselves in a pacific manner, waited at a little distance, and sent one of their number to greet the strangers, when they soon found a purchaser for their captive in a Mussulman noble, who, as his road for some distance lay in the same direction, had joined the escort. The price was arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, and Colonel Ross transferred to the service of his new master, while his old tyrants held on their way. He had suffered so much while in their power, that he was glad of any change, in the idea that it could not be for the worse. His new master seemed pleased with his erect and dignified bearing, the only marks of superiority of which he was perhaps a competent judge, and, after having questioned him upon his knowledge, assigned to him the care of some fine horses which he had purchased, and was conducting to his own house.

Shere Ishmael, the name of Colonel Ross's new master, was a man of great wealth and much consideration, and was then upon his return from a distant province to his own house. His new slave strove by assiduous attention to his favourite horses to win favour, without which there was little chance of his ever being able to regain liberty, or make his existence known to his friends and family.

Shere Ishmael soon separated from the caravan, and as he travelled by easy marches, in consideration of his numerous retinue and cattle, Colonel Ross by degrees recovered from the effects of the rough treatment to which he had so long been exposed. He had the satisfaction to observe that his care of the beautiful animals under his charge did not go unobserved by his master, who conceived a favourable idea of his abilities and education from his knowledge of horses. These favourites, however, beautiful as they were, offered but little pleasure to their indolent possessor, except the pride of having in his stud animals of such celebrity.

CHAPTER XLI.

"From the flowered verge
Of this clear lake now stray'd the devious path,
Amid ambrosial tufts, where spicy plants,
Weeping their perfumed tears of myrrh and nard,
Stood crown'd with Sharon's rose; or where, apart,
The patriarch palm his load of sugar'd dates
Showered plenteous: where the fig of standard strength
And rich pomegranate wrapp'd in dulcet pulp
Their racy seed; or where, with golden fruit
Mature, the citron waved its splendid bough."

MASON.

On Shere Ishmael's arrival at his own house, he thought proper to remove his new slave Pahari, as he chose to have him called, from his duties in his stable to those in his garden, in which he greatly delighted. He had observed that upon the road his slave had often gathered the plants which he found in his way, and examined them with attention, from which circumstance he had concluded that he would be a proper person to intrust with the care of his favourite retreat. Shere Ishmael, like most Mussulmans of his rank, had been a hunter in his youth, but now preferred the tranquil pleasures

of smoking on his chaboutter* to the fatigue of the saddle. A very little time was sufficient to show him that he had judged right of his slave Pahari, and that his knowledge was equal to his assiduity. Shere Ishmael could soon boast of a greater variety of fine flowers than he had ever before possessed, and the celebrity of his garden spread through the country. It was renowned for producing the greatest quantity of flowers for processions, as well as the greatest abundance of roses for rose-water, and Shere Ishmael felt his first pleasure greatly increase as soon as he knew that it was talked of by others, or that, in their own phrase, "the fame of his garden filled the world."

Pahari, finding that he grew in favour in his master's sight, redoubled his exertions to please him, and strove to instruct the native servants who worked under him in the best manner of cultivating the plants and improving the fruits.

The garden in which Shere Ishmael so much delighted was a large, square piece of ground, adjoining the family apartments of his house, and surrounded by a very high wall; it was well stocked with fine old trees in thickets and alleys, leading to two large tanks, one at each end. That nearest the house was appropriated to bathing, and a handsome flight of white marble stepped down into the water, which was shaded by drooping foliage. The other was an immense reservoir of gold-fish, as feeding these nimble captives and watching their lively evolutions was a favourite amusement of their sedentary lord. The borders of these tanks were planted with the choicest flowers, and the scent of roses perfumed the air, while in the night the bulbuls answered from the thicket. Here it was Shere Ishmael's pleasure to sit and smoke his hookah for hours together, on a little platform extending over the tank, having an ornamental canopy overhead, while a servant at his feet threw food to the gold-fishes which gambolled around him.

The unhappy Pahari laboured year after year without being able to accomplish the end which had, during all that time, never been for one hour out of his thoughts. His master, conscious of his value, treated him with kindness and consideration—at least with as much kindness as a native of his rank could bestow upon a menial in his service. He provided him with every comfort his situation would admit except those he most desired; for, certain that the desire of escape must exist, however disguised or repressed, he took care that his slave, from the first hour of his entering his service, should never receive the smallest portion of money, and he prohibited every one in his household, upon pain of his displeasure or death, from bestowing money upon him for any kind of service he might render; joined to which, he kept such a strict watch, and had taken such effectual measures to prevent evasion, that escape seemed impracticable.

Shere Ishmael had caused a house to be built for the accommodation of his European slave immediately beyond the garden-wall; this little dwelling and small court he surrounded with a wall as high as that of the garden, and covered it with a grating over the top, so that there was neither entrance or exit except by the single small door which led into the garden, and which,

* Platform.

† Bulbul—nightingale.

when he had left it at night, was strongly closed after him on the garden side. Beyond these precincts he was never permitted to move, and he was sometimes tempted to despair of its ever being otherwise.

After many years of long captivity had slowly passed away, uncheered by the slightest communication with any friend, and the hope which had hitherto sustained him was almost dead—for he found that, as his selfish master was satisfied with his exertions, his precautions were, if possible, augmented, and that an addition of personal comfort, tending to preserve his health and secure his life, was all the fruit he reaped, an incident occurred which seemed to animate his expiring hopes.

Shere Ishmael had been for many years without a son to inherit his name or lay his head in the dust, the greatest misfortune which, in his Mussulman estimation, could have lighted upon him. Then Mustapha Ishmael was born, to the delight and honour of his mother; but, from his childhood upward, this youth had manifested such an untractable and sullen spirit, that, greatly as Shere Ishmael had desired an heir, he had more sorrow than satisfaction in his son.

Mustapha Ishmael had attained his twelfth year before another son made his appearance to dispute the inheritance and affections of his father. This was the young Islam, "the beauty of the world," "the sun of his father's house," and "the star of all hearts," as he was termed by his doting parents; and he it was who ultimately changed the gloomy prospect which had so long darkened round Colonel Ross.

One morning, when he was at work in a thicket near the great tank, he was startled by a splash in the water, and, running to the spot to ascertain what had happened, he found that the little Islam had fallen from the platform, where, in imitation of his father, he had been feeding the gold-fishes. Colonel Ross, who was attached to the child, now of the same age as his Eleonora when he had last seen her, instantly plunged into the water and brought up the terrified boy, whom he delivered into the hands of his alarmed father, who, upon the child's being missed in the house, had preceded the servants into the garden, almost anticipating what had happened.

Shere Ishmael, in the first transports of his joy on receiving his lost favourite, carried him in his arms to his frantic mother, who could hardly be persuaded, though she saw her darling move and heard him speak, that he had really escaped with life. As soon as she was satisfied in this point, her next idea was to denounce vengeance upon the servants who were in care of the child, and to whose carelessness she attributed what had happened, if, indeed, they had not been bribed by the mother of Mustapha Ishmael, who had always been considered as heir-apparent of his father's fortune until this young and more favoured child had come to disinherit him.

As soon as this idea took possession of the mind of the beautiful Neer-ul-Dowlah, she demanded vengeance upon the guilty culprit whose business it was, as head-attendant upon her child, to have watched over him as those who watch for the morning. In punishing him she felt as if her jealous anger could extend to the mother of Mustapha Ishmael.

In vain the unhappy man protested that, in running with the child, he had got a large thorn into his foot, which he had only stopped for a moment to extract, and that, during that moment, his young lord had escaped into the garden without observation, and that he would sooner have cut his own throat than willingly have suffered a hair of his head to be hurt. The female domestics, willing to please their mistress, protested with one voice "that it was not for a slave like him to feel sorrow or pain when the pleasure of his lord's son was concerned. What were all the thorns that could be in the foot of a slave to the will of a great man's child?"

"It is true," answered Neer-ul-Dowiah; "how could a man like him feel pain when he was in the care of my child, if he had not been bribed by the mother of Mustapha Ishmael, who cannot see without envy the gracious gift which the Prophet has granted to my prayers, nor the favour which he finds in the sight of his father? Such a servant is unworthy to live on the earth: away with him, away with him! Let his head be taken from his body, for a warning to any one who dares to neglect my child."

Shere Ishmael, though convinced that the accident had happened as the servant stated, did not think it worth while to displease or thwart his favourite wife about a thing of such very little importance as the life of a creature so far below him, and who was doubtless created for his use; at all events, deserved or not, his punishment would be a salutary warning to those who came after him.

Influenced by such reasons, he made but a slight attempt to turn the wrath of the lovely Neer-ul-Dowiah from its object, and, finding that opposition made her but the more resolute, he permitted her to follow her own inclination in such a trifle, and returned to the garden to bestow favour upon the Christian slave who had preserved his child, and who was, until this moment, forgotten.

"Pahari," he said, "this day has risen fortunately for you: you have been honoured to do a service to your master's house, and have his permission to ask what reward you please short of your liberty, or conveying letters to your infidel country."

"If my lord thinks that I have done well," answered Pahari, "and if he rejoices in the presence of his child, let him think also what I suffer, cut off from mine, who is even ignorant of my existence in this world, while she has neither the care of father or mother to guide and direct her."

"Your own words answer you: never having had your care, your child cannot have missed it; but this spot, accustomed to your watchful hand, would languish and die if it were withdrawn. Pahari, think of what I can grant without more loss to your lord than gain to you; for a wise man calculates the effects of steps before he puts his feet in motion."

"Let me speak once more, and let not my lord be displeased that a freeborn man, who has also had rule over many of his own people in his own land, should desire to return to the place of his nativity, his family, and his child; let not the fear of hurt to the inanimate productions of the soil close the fountain of generosity

which flows with the greatest force in the most noble minds; but let my lord know that I have trained every servant under my rule to look to his interest and his pleasure as I have done, and that my absence will not wither a flower or dry a plant in this fair garden."

"I have told you, Pahari," answered Shere Ishmael, in rising wrath, "to ask what it is my pleasure to grant and fit for you to receive. Will you have slaves to attend upon you, or splendid clothes to adorn you? sumptuous fare for your table, or music to refresh your soul after toil? Name what you want, and it shall be yours, for Shere Ishmael is as generous as he is great."

The Mussulman paused in haughty dignity, waiting a reply to his gracious proposals, but, finding that it did not come, he bent his brow and folded his arms, as he continued, in a louder tone,

"Speak, slave! your lord commands you to say which of his bounties is to flow upon you: what is your request?"

"I have none," answered Colonel Ross, stepping back, without bending his head. "Know, Shere Ishmael, that liberty is the only gift in your possession which your slave thinks worth his acceptance."

"Insolent and audacious slave! do you dare to set at defiance the bounties of your master? Do you know that your life is in my hands, and that, in a moment, I can send you to share the execution which is at this moment preparing for the careless servant who brought fear into the house of his lord?"

"No, Shere Ishmael; death, next to liberty, is a boon which self-interest would not grant me; but, if you have not come here to mock me with the offer of gifts which you will not bestow, grant me the life of this condemned man."

"To show you, unbelieving as you are, that the faith of a Mussulman is without stain, the life of the dog is yours. Here, Abbas!" he continued, to a servant who waited at a respectful distance behind him, "stop the execution; and say that the life of the dog is granted to the Christian slave by the clemency of his lord, who has permitted a slave's request to approach his ear; but let the order be, that the reprieved wretch never again pollute the air I breathe, or no power on earth shall save him."

Abbas made his salams, and departed upon his errand of extorted mercy, while Shere Ishmael turned away from one whose insolence, as he termed it, rendered him unworthy of the light of his countenance, and spake to himself, though loud enough to be heard by Pahari,

"I have done more than ever lord did for those who have no life but his favour, no existence but his will; and let those for whom I have retracted my own pleasure look to the use they make of such astonishing favour, and see that their zeal and industry grow in proportion."

Having finished his speech, Shere Ishmael did not deign to bestow a single regard upon his auditor, but turned, and slowly retraced his steps into his house, not without something of the feeling which animated Haman when Mordecai the Jew refused to bow before him: that a slave had set his power at naught, and had, in a manner, compelled him to grant what was

contrary to his wishes, was an affront not easily to be forgiven, and, if self-interest had not restrained him, vengeance might have followed.

It was different with his wife, the beautiful Neer-ul-Dowlah, who felt gratitude to the preserver of a child upon whom all the affections of her heart depended. He was not only the sole object of her love, but of her ambition; and he gave her the means of enjoying a pleasure scarcely less sensible, that of mortifying and humiliating the only one of the ladies of the family who had ever dared to enter into the least rivalry with her.

The mother of Mustapha Ishmael had, presuming upon her having given an heir to the fortunes of Shere Ishmael, ventured to conduct herself towards the reigning favourite in a way which no Mussulman woman could forget or forgive; and, deeply as Neer-ul-Dowlah would certainly have felt the loss of her boy, the idea that Noor Jehan would rejoice in her sorrow, and that Mustapha Ishmael would profit by it, and take his accustomed place in his father's household, would have added to its bitterness.

When Shere Ishmael, in the overflowing of his indignation, related to her the scene which had just passed in the garden between him and his insolent slave Pahari, he was incensed to find that she did not feel the insult offered to him in the rejection of his favours as he thought she was in duty bound to do. Angry with her indifference to his slighted dignity, he rejoiced in the opportunity of giving her a piece of information which he had a few minutes before dreaded to communicate; as if certain of rousing her from her indifference, he continued,

"And in his audacity, this proud Christian dog extracted a pardon from me for the slave whom your just anger had ordered to execution."

Neer-ul-Dowlah heard the fact without the storm of indignation which he expected to raise: her anger, like that of a wilful child, had subsided, and she even felt something of admiration for him who had dared to control the man whom she was accustomed to look upon as all-powerful.

She answered, mildly, "It is not for me to disapprove what my lord has been pleased to do: his bounties, like the sun, shine on all."

Shere Ishmael looked at her for a moment in silence, unable to comprehend the motive which reconciled her to the pardon of a wretched being whom an hour before she had declared unworthy to live, and whose instant death she had demanded as the only means of freeing her mind from constant apprehension on account of her child, whom she professed to think in danger while such a miscreant encumbered the earth.

"This white dog," he thought, "has a spell to bind the minds of those who come near him, else why should I have granted his request, and why should she have been contented that I had done so?"

"Had it not been for the loss, mother of Islam," he continued, "that my garden would have sustained, I would have listened to his prayers, and let him go to his country and his child."

"His child!" answered Neer-ul-Dowlah; "will you keep him at a distance from his child, and he has preserved yours! If it had not been

for him, sorrow would this day have been in the house of Shere Ishmael, and its hope would have been laid in the dust."

"The house and the hopes of Shere Ishmael," answered the Mussulman, proudly, "are above the reach of a slave like him; and it fills my ears with wonder, Neer-ul-Dowlah, to hear you speak for an infidel dog from a strange land. Though he has been honoured to render service to his lord, our holy Prophet has not allowed the wives of his faithful followers to take such names within their lips, nor to think of such wretches in their hearts. What signifies them, or their country, or their kindred, to the servants of the true Prophet, more than the lair of the jackal or the brother of the dog! Do men, when they take the wild beasts of the forest and put them to their use, think of the rest who are left in their dens! or do they lighten the burden and give them liberty because they snort and champ the bit! Do they not rather make them feel the whip and the lash, and break their spirits to what is required of them! And when I have got one who serves me better than ever slave served me before, shall I play the fool and give him his liberty! shall I throw away the goods which fortune has put into my hands!"

"He has saved my child," returned Neer-ul-Dowlah, "and shall I not wish that he was restored to his! Shall I not wish that Shere Ishmael, whose bounties reach to the ends of the earth, whose light shines on the dark places and they become bright, should cause his countenance to lighten upon the fate of his slave, and turn it to joy!"

"Neer-ul-Dowlah, I have told you that the wives of the faithful are to think only of the happiness of the lot which the Prophet has bestowed upon them, and I warn you that Shere Ishmael will not dispense with the duty which is claimed by the humblest of the followers of Mohammed: let not your heart be stained by another thought upon the fate of this infidel stranger, on pain of my displeasure."

Shere Ishmael rose in silence, and left the apartment in the conviction that his severity had laid this subject at rest forever; but his prohibition had only excited in the mind of the beautiful Neer-ul-Dowlah an ardent desire to see the slave she was forbidden to think of, and, if possible, to give him the means of effecting his escape, which seemed to her desirable in proportion as it was opposed by Shere Ishmael.

Her little boy now rose refreshed from sleep, his dark cheek crimsoned by the hue of health, and his black eyes sparkling with animation; he ran towards his mother, and, as he cast himself into her extended arms, she resolved that, if she could prevent it, his preserver should not forever languish in captivity. She recollected that, upon the first birthday of Mustapha Ishmael, Noor Jehan had procured a boon from Shere Ishmael which he had sworn never to grant. The recollection came like fuel to flame, and she felt her honour engaged to resist her husband's unjust commands, or even to punish him for the way in which her suit had been treated.

"Haughty as he is," she thought, "I shall let him know that my will is something in his household—I shall not be treated as if age had already deprived me of the right to command. Shall I, the jewel of the whole world, and the

mother of his favourite son, in whose presence none dare stand erect, submit to be treated with less consideration than Noor Jehan, who is not worthy to lift up her eyes in my presence?"

CHAPTER XLII.

"Now let us thank the Eternal Power, convinced
That heaven but tries our virtues by affliction;
That oft the cloud which wraps the present hour,
Serves but to brighten all our future days."

Brown's *Barbarossa*.

WHILE Neer-ul-Dowlah, actuated by gratified jealousy and revenge, was, on her part, considering how she could carry her projects into execution, Allumgier, the disgraced attendant, whom Colonel Ross had saved from execution, was no less anxious to effect the same purpose, and partly from the same motive. He felt some slender emotions of gratitude to one whom he only considered as the passive instrument used by overruling destiny to accomplish what was already predestinated; but he burned with the ardent desire to be revenged on the cruel master who had condemned him unheard, and without compunction; and who, when mercy had been extorted from him, had banished his unoffending servant from the home of his fathers, to be a wanderer among those whose faces he had never seen, and whose speech was strange to his ears.

To deprive Shere Ishmael of one source of his pride and pleasure, by giving liberty to his most useful and valued slave, was a revenge which Allumgier thought he could enjoy without the fear of detection. He knew that Pahari, as he was accustomed to call Colonel Ross, could both read and write the language of the country, for he had seen him so occupying his leisure hours, and, with this knowledge, he arranged his project accordingly.

When Colonel Ross had retired to his little enclosure on the night of this eventful day, and was preparing, as usual, to cook his evening meal in his little court, he was surprised at the noise of something falling at his side, which had been thrown over the wall and through the grating. He took it up, and found a palm-leaf tied to a stone.

Satisfied that such an arrangement had not taken place without design, he trimmed his lamp, and examined the contents of the leaf which served for paper. He had some difficulty in making out the character, which was traced upon the leaf without ink, by the point of a sharp needle. He was obliged to increase his fire, and after a time read as follows:

"Pahari,

"If you want to see your own country before death takes you, fate sends you one who will to-morrow night, after the moon has retired from the land of the faithful, cut a hole in the gratings which enclose you like a beast of the jungle. When you hear the hand that works for your freedom, let no words escape your lips; wait in patience until the following night, and then, when the moon has veiled her light, use the rope-ladder which you will find, and mount in silence. At the outside of your prison you will see him whose fate it is to set you free; fellow where he leads, but let your tongue cleave

to your mouth. If this writing give joy, throw the stone back over the wall: be prudent and be dumb."

Colonel Ross's first impulse, on reading this welcome note, was to obey the last injunction; he threw the stone over the wall, and, having again read his directions, burned the palm-leaf, and then sat down to consider who could possibly be so much interested in his favour as to take such a hazardous step, and to propose what was still more so.

Allumgier, with whom he had frequently conversed in the garden, and who had, in fact, in his leisure hours taught him to write his letters upon palm-leaves with an iron pen, was the only person he could possibly imagine who could run such a risk; for in the evening he had heard from the people in the garden that Allumgier was the reprieved offender, though he was ignorant of the circumstance at the time he had demanded pardon for the condemned culprit.

"Allumgier, under all these circumstances, must be the man;" an idea which again kindled the hope of liberty which was almost dead within him. This night, the first in which he had ever had any plausible cause to hope, seemed long beyond endurance; he thought over all which might possibly take place, until, weary by his own suggestions, he tried to lose them in sleep; but he soon awakened from his feverish and unrefreshing slumbers, and walked out into the clear moonlight, in the idea that the wished-for morning had at length dawned; but he still saw the same bright stars burning in their own settled beauty, the same deep blue heaven over his head, as he had done for all the long years of his captivity. These stars, looking down on his nightly solitude, he had been accustomed to regard as his familiar friends in all his sorrows; he had often raised his eyes to these beautiful and unchanging witnesses of his afflictions—these evidences of Divine power and goodness, and sighed to be relieved from the various ills which flesh is heir to; he had wished to join the company of those who, after many tribulations, have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: this night he again looked upon these stars, but, in his altered frame of mind, still desired to see them in the land of the living.

"But thy will be done, O my God!" he said, as, oppressed by the feelings which newly-awakened hope had set afloat in his heart, he bent before the Father of the spirits of all flesh; "thou knowest the inmost recesses of my soul, thou seest the chambers of imagery, thou hast formed the heart of man, and thou alone canst control and restrain it."

Morning at length did dawn—the last morning but one which Colonel Ross hoped to pass as a slave; he had never before listened with so much pleasure to the turning of his jailer's key in the door which admitted him to the garden. His work led him to the borders of the bathing-tank near the house, and at some distance from the rest of the people, who were occupied in a thicket at the end of the garden. While he was stooping to prune one of the rose-bushes a white handkerchief fluttered down as if from the house, and fell at his feet. He looked up in the intention to discover whence it had come, and perceived a veiled figure partly con-

cealed by the window-blind. She made a quick sign of silence, threw out a purse, and instantly shut the window, as if afraid of being remarked. That single high window and the door by which Shere Ishmael entered were the only communications between the house and the garden. Colonel Ross took up the gift, which he could not doubt was intended for him. This was no time to examine the contents, curious as he might be to know what they were, and he hid the bag in his waistband and went on with his work.

As soon as he found himself again alone in his enclosure, he drew forth the new-found treasure which had come so unexpectedly into his possession, and found it to contain a quantity of gold mohwrs, and one of the right-hand shells which the natives of Asia believe to secure prosperity to the possessor. The sight of money, to which his eyes had been so long strangers, and which had been for years kept from his grasp as the key of liberty, now seemed to his excited feelings as an immediate forerunner of release.

"Let me but once be beyond these walls," he thought, "and this will do the rest—this will smooth all difficulties, and end my hopes or my fears in certainty: yes," he said, as he divided the gold into separate packets, and sewed it into the clothes he meant to wear on the night of his flight, "this yellow earth will accomplish all; had it been sooner in my possession, perhaps all the bolts and bars of the suspicious Shere Ishmael might not have been firm enough to deter me; this, at least," he thought, examining the shell, "must come from one who wishes well to my projects; she has given me the means to carry them into execution, and, with the belief of her country, provided a talisman to secure their accomplishment. But who within those walls can be so much interested in the fate of a miserable captive? who there could know that I have sighed to be free? The magnitude of the gift shows that it could not come from any one in mean condition; but who of his family, in direct opposition to Shere Ishmael's orders, would have dared to bestow it?"

He could not conjecture. The mysterious silence always observed in Eastern families prevented his even knowing who composed the household of this haughty lord: that it was large was all the information of which he was possessed, and that the gift was the offering of female gratitude for the service rendered to the young Islam was what seemed most probable; as such, he did not scruple to appropriate it, and apply it for the purpose to which it appeared to be intended. The secrecy with which it was given proved that it was without the knowledge of his arbitrary master, and the shell which accompanied the money showed that it was with the intention of procuring his freedom, for what was there in which he could desire success, if not in his efforts to obtain liberty?

The nearer the hour approached, and the greater the number of obstacles which were removed, the more impatient did Colonel Ross become for the darkness which should allow his unknown friend to open the grate of his prison and let the captive go free. After his evening meal he tried to lay himself down, and forget, in sleep, the time which must elapse before the

moon, in her first quarter, should withdraw her light; but he started at every sound. The wing of a bat, the distant howl of the wolves roaming for their prey, and the hooting of the night-birds, had never appeared so incessant and so annoying.

At length, for time wears on, whether we watch its progress in breathless impatience, or slumber in tranquil oblivion through the hours, the wished-for sound caught his open ear; the grating of a file was softly but distinctly distinguishable from all the other noises with which it was occasionally mingled. He listened, he hardly dared to breathe for fear of breaking his compact of silence; but the effort to refrain from speaking one single word to the dark outline of a human figure, which he could plainly perceive perched overhead between him and the starry sky, the motion of whose arm he could see as the little grating noise of the file sunk into his ear, was almost beyond his power.

If his eyes could have for one moment met those of the creature upon whom his hopes depended, he would have been satisfied; he would, by that single glance, have had a fixed idea of him upon whose form his fate hung; but it was impossible: he felt that he was undistinguishable in the darkness which covered his features, and to make a light at that unusual hour was an expedient which he dared not risk.

After he had listened and watched, and watched and listened to the unremitting movements of the figure above, until the increased freshness of the air gave indication of the approaching dawn, he observed the silent workman, in the intention of showing him that his labour was accomplished, raise the small part of the grating which he had cut away, held it up for a moment above his head, that the prisoner might see that his way was open, then replaced it as before, and disappeared.

Colonel Ross saw the movement with great satisfaction, convinced that, as his unknown friend had happily completed so much, he would not fail him at the appointed hour. The screaming of the fox-bats as they quitted the fruit-trees in the garden, where they had been feasting all night, gave warning that the first streak of morning was visible on the horizon, and he prepared to recommence the labours of another day; "but it is the last," he thought, "the very last, that I shall ever pass in miserable captivity"—the thought consoled him—"in four-and-twenty hours I shall be free!"

The day passed, as usual, in the embellishment of the spot he had so long cultivated, and he found occasion to pass all the morning on the border of the bathing-tank, while the rest were at a distance, in the hope that he might have some farther communications with his friend at the high window; he even sung a wild air of his own country in the expectation of notice, but nothing of the kind took place; the blind remained down, and the day passed as all the former years of his captivity had done. Shere Ishmael came no more into the garden, probably offended by the freedom with which Pahari had behaved towards him, and unprovided with any pretext to wreak upon him at such a moment the displeasure which he felt.

At night, when Colonel Ross was again alone, separated from the living world by the bars and

bolts which had hitherto been an impassable barrier, he looked up to his grated roof, and saw his way of escape through those very bars which he had so often contemplated in hopeless despondence; but while his eye rested upon the straight outlet, his mind went forward to the other side, where all was new and unknown.

"Shall I," was his natural thought, "by that narrow passage regain my country, my friends, and my long-lost child, if, indeed, my Eleonora is still an inhabitant of this lower world? All I hope for below lies on the other side of that little opening, which must be to me the door of certainty; and though I know that such an opening does exist, still I cannot attain it without the assistance of the hand by which it was made."

But Colonel Ross, in the midst of his anxieties, did not forget the bodily exertions he would be called upon to make, and in order that he might be competent to the undertaking, laid himself down to rest, in the agreeable expectation that when he was next awaked it would not be to servitude. Security had taken possession of his mind, and he actually slept until something falling at his side aroused him; he extended his hands, which caught hold of a ladder of cord in the darkness. Looking up, he saw that the grating was open, and mounted without losing an instant or uttering a word. As soon as he had gained the roof, his dumb friend, who waited upon the parapet, drew up the ladder, and replaced the grating as he had done on the former night.

Colonel Ross admired the forethought which devised this means of throwing dust in the eyes of those who would doubtless make the narrowest scrutiny as soon as their flight was discovered, but no word passed his lips: his conductor again fastened his ladder by two iron hooks which he had attached to one end, and motioned to Colonel Ross to descend before him. When he had reached the bottom of the wall, his guide above again undid the ladder, and let himself down on his feet like a cat. He took up the ladder, seized his *protégé* by the hand, and, without uttering a syllable, crossed into the jungle upon the opposite side.

In silence and in darkness they walked quickly forward by a path with which the guide seemed to be familiar, and when they emerged from the shadow of the trees, it was upon the banks of a rapid river. The guide, letting go the hand of his companion, stooped down behind some bushes, and drew forth four large pieces of very light, spongy wood, covered over with a smooth bark, which prevented them from absorbing the water, and rendered them exceedingly buoyant. These he had previously placed in readiness; and taking one of the pieces under each arm, and making his friend do the same with the other two, he threw himself into the stream of the river, and was instantly followed by the colonel, who was well enough acquainted with native habits to have seen this mode of travelling before. They were both carried forward with such rapidity by the current that the fugitives felt every moment more secure in the impossibility of being overtaken, and Colonel Ross's only fear was that, from the immense rate at which the river rushed, they must be approaching some cataract; but, as his guide still

maintained the same obstinate silence, he did not think fit to disturb it by question, conjecturing that he must be well acquainted with the nature of the country from the step he had taken, and that he must have good reason for the dumb show which he thought proper to keep up.

When morning began to appear, Colonel Ross for a moment feared that his European complexion would betray him to those who might come to the river for devotion, but one glance at his own sunburned hands and arms put the notion to flight; his beard and mustaches had grown, and he had no doubt but the tint of his face and neck had become as native as his hands. Reassured upon this point, he returned the salam of the first bather whom they passed, and who addressed them with,

"Salam, brothers, you travel at a good hour."

"It is true, brother," answered the guide, who now proved to be Allumgier, breaking silence for the first time, "but we have a vow to perform before the sun looks on the mosque."

Before the answer could be given, the stream had carried them far beyond the bather, and Allumgier continued,

"We are now out of the reach of the old wolf, Shere Ishmael; we have sailed more miles in four hours than he or his best horses could make in ten. The waters which run in this country do not faint by the way, and before we join the Great River (meaning the Indus), we shall be farther than he dares to follow us, for the Newab whose country we are now coming to is one with whom Shere Ishmael cannot drink of the same stream or eat of the same tree, and we may rest in security until the sun is low."

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Swiftly, brother, wilt thou ride,
O'er the long and stormy tide,
Fleeter than the hurricane,
Till thou view those scenes again,
Where thy father's house was reared,
Where thy mother's voice was heard,
Where the dance, the festive song,
Of many a friend divided long,
Doom'd through stranger lands to roam,
Shall bid thy spirit welcome home!"

BOWLES.

ALLUMGIER had chosen to float down the river, as such a mode of travelling left no traces, rather than run the risk of seizing a boat in his master's neighbourhood, which would be instantly missed, and as certainly betray the way the fugitives had taken. To have hoped for concealment by remaining in a district under the power of Shere Ishmael would have been impossible; and even if he could have procured horses, flight in that way equally so, as his master was renowned for having the best, and in the greatest number in the country, at his command. Allumgier's plan was not only, therefore, the safest, but, at the same time, the most speedy, and they were actually out of Shere Ishmael's power before their absence was dreamed of.

At the usual hour the bolt of Pahari's solitary dwelling was undrawn and the door opened, but, contrary to custom, no slave appeared. "He is sick," said the head gardener, as he entered, "and is still in his house."

The little dwelling was soon examined with no better success; his bed was empty, and he was nowhere to be found. Everything remained in its usual condition, and there seemed no possible means by which he could have made his escape, unless, indeed, as the gardener and his associates (for his noise had brought the whole party to his assistance) were of opinion, some enchanter had rendered the infidel invisible to Mussulman eyes, and so effected his escape.

The gardeners clamoured together, each louder than his fellow, in expressions of wonder and amazement, till the unusual tumult soon conveyed the unwelcome intelligence to the ears of Shere Ishmael, who heard with fury that his valuable slave Pahari was nowhere to be found. "Who shut him in last night? Who opened the door this morning?" he demanded.

The head gardener stood forward, and, salaming to the ground, informed his lord that he, in the sight of all present, had last night locked up the white slave as usual, and that, in their presence also, he had unlocked the door this morning, which he found just as he had left it, but no slave was within.

"Saddle my horses, prepare my boats, and call upon my chokeydars," commanded the furious Mussulman: "let them beat every bush with more care than they ever did for the most savage animal. I shall have him dead or alive, and I shall know who has dared to do this in defiance of my orders, which none shall ever do and live."

Shere Ishmael despatched his several messengers in every direction in hopes of overtaking the fugitives, whom he conjectured could not be far off, as he wisely considered that his long captivity must have injured his powers of walking; he caused minute search to be made within and without the enclosure, where the prints of the footsteps of two persons were clearly visible. One, from the spread of the toes, was at once discerned to be a native; the other, for the opposite reason, was pronounced to be European.

"Here," said Shere Ishmael, while he foamed at the mouth with passion on the discovery, "here the infidel dog has passed, under the guidance of some of my people: look at those marks on the sand, and tell me if they are not those of a foot accustomed to wear a shoe, and the other that went before—whose are they?"

He caused every one present to measure the suspicious prints by his foot, but they were found not to answer; it was therefore clear that they, at any rate, were not the offending party.

"Allumgier," said the gardener, "Allumgier, sahib! Where did he go the day you turned him from your home?"

"How should I know what became of a slave like him? But you say the truth: he has left this token of my fault for not giving his head to feed the kites, as I would have done but for that infidel dog. Oh! if I can but take them, the birds will not meet with loss by the delay!"

He ground his teeth and stamped on the spot where he stood, moving a little switch which he carried in his hand, like a lion lashing his tail in preparation to spring upon his enemy. The traces of the steps were lost in the jungle, where twenty little paths led to the huts scattered about under the trees and to the river-side.

"A light boat has already fallen down the river," said Shere Ishmael, "and the horsemen are out over the country, so that, though they are loose for a moment, without wings they cannot escape from my hands. I would have the world to know, that in this land none dare walk a step or respire a breath of air contrary to the pleasure of Shere Ishmael."

The boast was vain; for while it was making, Colonel Ross and his faithful Allumgier had already entered the country of a man with whom Shere Ishmael was in such a state of open hostility that he dared not venture to risk his men within his power, and Allumgier confidently proposed to Colonel Ross to pass the day in rest and shade.

"It makes my heart happy to think how Shere Ishmael will rave like a madman when he finds that you are gone. He banished me, who was born in his house, who lived in the shadow of his protection, and who ate of his salt, and who was never guilty of a fault, and he would have given me over to death like a wild beast if you had not shown mercy; but I am not without my revenge, and he will know that it was Allumgier who did it. We may rest now; we shall not be noticed by those who are ignorant of it, and Shere Ishmael's men dare not seek us here."

"But if," said Colonel Ross, "they bring a present in their hands, the way will be open to them."

"True, sahib: Allumgier was, in his state of freedom, ready to acknowledge the superiority of the European. True, sahib; but if they come at all, it will be in too much haste for such a wise thought, and before they can get what fills the mouths of all men with sweet words, and makes all troubles smooth, we shall be gone."

Reassured by such reasoning, Colonel Ross stopped for the food and rest of which he was so much in need, and gave his friend money to purchase what was wanted for both. Refreshed by repose, towards evening they left the place in a fisherman's dingy, afraid to excite suspicion by the purchase of horses, as their outward appearance did not entitle them to any such luxury. Being now in safety, they went forward at their ease, taking care, however, to avoid anything which would create an idea that they had money in their possession, and they reached the Sind or the Indus without accident; thence, after much fatigue and exposure, they made their way to Bombay, the nearest European presidency.

Colonel Ross lost not an hour in writing to his agents at Madras for information regarding his child, and to inform them of his own existence, and he waited for an answer to his letter before deciding upon the steps he was to take. The answer, when it did arrive, overturned the hopes which he had permitted himself to indulge with too much security: it convinced him that he had lost her forever. They told him that they had never either seen or heard of his servant and his child, and to their certain knowledge neither the one nor the other had ever been heard of at Madras; that the regiment to which Colonel Ross belonged had embarked for Europe at the time of his supposed death, which had been announced in the newspapers as if he and his party had been cut off

by the Arabs; and this account was brought by the Sepoys, who had declared themselves to be the only individuals who had escaped the general massacre—an account so probable that none had ever thought of doubting its accuracy. There were none of the friends for whom Colonel Ross had inquired in existence at Madras; a few had returned to their native country, and the greater number were finally withdrawn from life and its anxieties. Of his fortune his agents were able to give a much more satisfactory account; interest had nearly trebled the original amount, and his accounts were in readiness whenever he chose to call for them.

This letter, then, for which he had so anxiously waited, informed Colonel Ross that he was rich, childless, and friendless; for it had brought such a blight upon his hopes that he hardly dared to entertain expectations of finding his family at home, any more than he had done the numerous circle of friends which he quitted when he left Madras. He had now no inducement to revisit that presidency, and, after settling his pecuniary affairs, resolved to quit India forever.

Having liberally rewarded Allumgier, and settled a pension upon him for his important service, Colonel Ross left him in the service of an officer at Bombay, as he dared not show himself in his own country while Shere Ishmael lived, and then embarked for England, but by stress of weather was forced into a port on the east coast of Ireland, where he found the vessel, whose wreck we have just witnessed, preparing to sail for Scotland, and in which he easily procured a passage. Change from a large vessel to a small one had caused a degree of illness which kept him to his cot, and it was not until he engaged the captain by a handsome sum to land him on the west coast of Scotland, at a small fishing-village which he mentioned, that he understood that there was a naval officer on board who wished to be set on shore at the same place. Malcolm Sinclair and he had not, therefore, seen each other until the commencement of the sudden storm which ended so fatally for the vessel, and disastrously for so many on board. This it was which prevented the explanation which would probably have taken place had the two gentlemen met at a time when their minds were more disengaged.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"Then when I saw he wooed me well,
I grew so proud his suit to see,
That I, who did not know myself,
Thought scorn o' such a youth as he."

Ancient Ballads.

On the morning after the wreck, care had been taken to recover as much of the seamen's and passengers' baggage as was not destroyed by the sea. Every man in the neighbourhood gladly lent his assistance to collect and save the effects of those who had suffered so much, and as the vessel had gone to pieces very near the shore, most of the sailors' chests and the trunks of the gentlemen had been washed up by the tide. The wounded men, under the care of their kind host, continued to do well, and the captain, with the rest, took their departure from Fernbraes af-

ter a thousand expressions of gratitude for the hospitality received.

Mr. Manning remained a guest, by the pressing invitation of Dr. M'Alpin, who rejoiced in the opportunity to show his sense of the service rendered to Cussim Ali. Malcolm Sinclair heard at Stoneyards as much of the late events as his sister thought proper to tell him; his father's death was to him perfectly unexpected; and though it was not an occurrence of which he could hear with indifference, it was not a sorrow, like that for his mother, at a much earlier age.

Jamesina, willing to accept the consolation in her power, left her sister, Miss Barbara, to the management of the household affairs at Stoneyards, and returned to Fernbraes, upon pretence, as she told Hugh, of serving his interests with his uncle.

Colonel Ross was in a few days so much recovered that he prepared to take possession of his own house, which he instantly restored to its ancient name of Inchbraken, fortunately in time to save the old burying-ground, which Miss Robina so much loved and respected, from the projected improvements of Murdoch. He had been now absent for some weeks, and had never written a line even to inform his sister of his safe arrival at the place of his destination; he must consequently be ignorant of the changes which so short a time had brought about among those he had quitted.

Fernbraes enjoyed all his heart could desire in the happiness and society of his friends; he saw clearly that, as soon as decent respect for his father's memory permitted Malcolm to speak, the families of Ross and M'Alpin would yet be united by nearer ties. Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow enjoyed the happiness which they had been the means of procuring. "Had it not been for your kindness, Mrs. Cheapstow," Colonel Ross used to say, "and your husband's generosity, my Eleonora might still, unknown to me, have been dragging on a sordid existence at Madras, while I pined here in widowed wretchedness."

Jamesina alone sighed in secret: Mr. Ross was absent, and even if he did return, he was no longer *Kelpfield*; still he had his own West Indian fortune, which, though perhaps decreased by the indulgence of his *very elegant taste*, would be sufficient for one of her managing talents, particularly as her own private fund would be more than enough for her own use—*private* it must remain, as she could not, with all her ingenuity, account for such sums being in her possession: a hardship the greater, as she felt that the knowledge would probably go something towards fixing Mr. Murdoch's decisions.

In this state of mind she was one morning interrupted by a visit from Mr. Shiftwell, when the rest of the family had dispersed on their several amusements. "I have been wishing very much to see you, Mr. Shiftwell," she said, as she entered and shut the door after him, "that I might have your opinion, ye ken, aboot the money that comes to me on my father's death."

"Ye havena wished more to see me than I have to see you, Miss Jamesina," he answered, with a hypocritical smile of peculiar meaning; "but what is the matter in hand?"

"Ye see that my brother, the young laird, has had the generosity to gie me my portion, the first thing he did—no but that I have well merited kindness at his hand—and, as I didna wish to lose the interest, I wanted to put it into your hands."

"Nothing can be more sensible—nothing can be more reasonable."

"I'll bring the money this moment, and ye can just gi' me a bit receipt for it, and take it awa wi' you."

Miss Jamesina left the room and returned with her bag containing all her treasure.

"But ye needna, Mr. Shiftwell, drop a word of this to anybody; for, though my brother, in consideration, as I said before, of my great services to him, gave me what was my right, he couldna, perhaps, make it convenient to do the same thing just so soon for the rest; and ye'll understand, Mr. Shiftwell, that it's no to be spoken aboot."

Mr. Farquhar Shiftwell had a pretty good idea of the character and motives of the lady with whom he was engaged, and when he had counted the money, and found it so much more than he knew it ought to be, he made a shrewd guess how matters stood. Having counted the money, he granted the desired receipt, and promised silence.

"There is nothing, Miss Jamesina," he said, "that ye could require of me, that I wad no be happy to do. I wish I could be as sure of your regards towards me."

"Anything that I can do for you or yours, Mr. Farquhar Shiftwell," said Jamesina, a little offended by his freedom, "ye may be *all* very sure of."

"That is not the question now, ma'am: some things have taken place in the country," he said, looking hard at her, "which would make you the better of a powerful protection—that's to say, a man who kens the law, and one, too, who kens more of these than ye may think. I am come here, Miss Jamesina, to offer myself for your husband, as nobody can help you better than myself."

"My husband, Mr. Farquhar Shiftwell! And how dared such a thought ever come into your head?"

Provoked as he might be, he had a point to carry, and therefore did not lose temper.

"The thought came into my head for your good," he answered; "for if inquiries are made into a' things, ye'll maybe want a friend who kens the law, as I said before, to haud by ye and tak your part; and who wad have so much interest in doing that as your humble servant, if he was your husband?"

"I dinna ken—I canna presume to guess what ye are talking aboot, or what ye are thinking aboot, Mr. Shiftwell," said Jamesina, ready to burst into tears of pride and vexation.

"If ye'll just think, Miss Jamesina," he answered, calmly, "of all that has taken place at the Black Rocks and at Stoneyards, ye'll be at no loss to understand my meaning."

She felt that she was in his power, and dared not retort, as inclination prompted her, but commanded her anger, and replied quietly, "I cannot see what either the one or the other has to do with the business; and, now I think of it, I'll tell my brother I can do without the money even now: here's the receipt, and gi' me back the bag, Mr. Shiftwell."

"Na, na, Miss Jamesina; the bag will yield ye more interest in my possession than in yours, never fear."

"But I dinna mind the interest in comparison of seeing my brother."

"Well, then, I am just on my way to Stoneyards; I'll tak it to him, and get his receipt for it in a proper, business-like way. It's no a thing

to be trusted to servants, nor to trouble you wi', Miss Jamesina. I'll tell your brother that, on second thoughts, ye wish to let this sum lie in his hands."

"Ye'll do nothing of the kind, Mr. Shiftwell; gi' me the bag, and I'll do it myself."

"Not trust it to me to tak over the hill! how is that? Do ye think," he said, with a malicious sneer, "that your brother wad be surprised to see so much more in the bag than he put there? More than five hundred pounds that was settled by old Donald Fox for the young bairns by your grandfather? He does na ken, Miss Jamesina, how money can grow in your hands."

"Ye are in a merry humour this morning, I think, Mr. Shiftwell, and so obstinate that I maun let a wilful man tak his way, though it's very hard that I canna do what I like wi' my own money."

"Ye need na fash yoursel aboot that; just tak time to think of the proposal I have made till ye, and be certain that no one will ever hear what this contains, or know how it came there. Good-morning, my dear Miss Jamesina; I am a reasonable man that kens business, and dinna expect that ye are to mak up your mind on an important offer just in a minute. I have a good place open to me in Aberdeen, and am sure ye wad like it."

Taking her hand, which she dared not refuse for fear of exasperating him, he repeated his odious compliments and took his departure, leaving the lady in a state of indignation and mortification which it would be difficult to picture.

"What is to be done now?" thought she; "how am I to get out of this hobble? It's plain that mean, prying, suspicious body, Farquhar Shiftwell—weary on the auld farrand snout o' him—has got to the bottom o' this job; he knows my father's part in it, and he kens mine, and I am at the mercy o' a creature like him; one word o' his ill scrapit tongue, as smooth and as oily as he can mak it, wad bring Hugh like a tiger on my back, and all that I have done for years might be lost in a moment, to say nothing o' the disgrace of such a business; and more than that, there's no a deed that has been done for the last twenty years but he can tell! How he has houkit, like a mole in the dark, for a' that knowledge, is a marvel to me! Of all that ever has befallen me, this is the worst, and how I am to get out of it passes my skill! I have only one hope: if Murdoch Ross wad come back as he should do, that bit body daurna dispute wi' the like o' him. Often as I have wished to be his wife, I never had so much need of it as at this moment; but I winna despair; nothing is to be got by faltering on the way; and I'll just keep a fair face wi' this upstart body, and if it wad be to gain time, let him think, forsooth—it sets well the cocket nose o' him—that when my money is placed, I'll listen to his proposals. Many things fall out between the cup and the lip, and I'll maybe find ways yet to be upsides wi' him for his presuming pretensions. The like o' him, a little petty fogan writer in a borough town, that was recommended to me as a sort of Davy-do-a'-thing, to even himself to one of the oldest families in the country!

"I could tell Robina Ross, to be sure, that he has found out aboot my poor father, and she wad help me—she wad na let me be browbeat on that score; but the money is another thing. I canna speak of that to her nor to living creature, and there he has me, and that he knows right weel;

though, to be sure, I thought, and it was natural for me to think, that when I got my brother, with fine speeches and fair promises of helping his views with his uncle, to pay what was my due, that he couldna be informed how much it was; but he kens a' things. A bird durst na flee in the air but he kens it, sicca fox he is; he thinks he hands me under his thumb, but I'll maybe find means to bring him down on his marrow-bones yet."

Poor Jamesina, in the midst of the happiness of others, passed her days in the most anxious misery; all her art was insufficient to disguise her chagrin, which her uncle, when he observed it, attributed to the absence of Mr. Murdoch, and almost regretted that he had not been in the way upon the desired day, which would have spared her such vexation.

CHAPTER XLV.

"But, mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight often vain,
The best laid schemes of mice and men,
Oft gang agley,
And leave us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy!"
BURNS.

COLONEL ROSS had now been for a week installed at Inchbraken, where the family from Fernbraes were paying him a visit; Jamesina was standing at a window talking with Colonel and Mrs. Cheapstow, when her attention was diverted from the subject in discussion by the noise of wheels in the avenue: "Look there, Mrs. Cheapstow," she said, thrusting her head out of the window, "there is the handsomest carriage I have ever seen in the country coming straight to the house, and the outriders, too, are in the Ross livery. Who can it be, Miss Robina? Can it be your brother returned from London with that fine new equipage?"

"Nothing is more likely," answered Miss Ross, rising and going to the window; "such a thing as that is quite to Murdoch's taste."

"A man had need to have a wife to require such a gay set out," said the doctor.

"Or be upon the point of taking one," said Colonel Cheapstow.

Miss Jamesina, unable to bear the flow of agreeable ideas caused by this suggestion, retired to a sofa, where she set herself in her best attitude, and endeavoured to compose her fluttered spirits; and the rest of the party left the window where they had been making their observations, each having a different feeling towards the owner of the fine vehicle which had now wheeled round to the house-door.

Jamesina listened for the first sounds of the voices on the stairs: they drew near, and Mr. Murdoch Ross entered the room, conducting a showy and fashionably-dressed lady, whom he begged permission to introduce to Miss Jamesina, who happened to be nearest to him, as "Mrs. Ross."

Poor Jamesina's brilliant prospects vanished into thin air when the appalling sound struck her ear. She, however, so far commanded her movements, if not her feelings, as to rise and make a very formal courtesy, with her lips firmly shut, and her elbows twisted back. Mr. Ross, happy in the dignity and consequence of his situation, offered his hand, which Miss Jame-

sina so far conquered her reluctance as to accept.

"I have been telling my wife, Miss Sinclair," he said, opening his mouth in a broad grin, "the pleasure she will have in your company. Mrs. Ross is prepared to find an amiable friend in Miss Jamesina Sinclair."

The lady thus addressed stammered some awkward speech about "wishing him joy;" and the bride, casting a look of triumphant comparison from the homely figure who stood before her in plain mourning, to her own showy person, graciously "hoped that she would have a farther opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of a lady who stood so high in the esteem of her husband."

"But, indeed, I am perfectly charmed with everything here; I find it exactly as Mr. Ross told me. How I admire the elegant taste of this room, and everything about the house! Indeed, I am quite proud to consider myself mistress of such a place."

Mrs. Ross, satisfied that she had won all hearts by her engaging affability, smiled graciously on the party to whom her speech was addressed; but Miss Jamesina, unwilling to lose such an opportunity of paying back a little of the vexation she experienced, observed, with an air of hypocritical kindness, looking towards her recreant swain,

"I am certain Mr. Murdoch," she laid emphasis on the name, "will rejoice to lay down the title of Kelpfield in favour of his eldest brother, who is come among us like a visiter from the other world, and Mrs. Ross is too happy in her own lot to miss this bonny place, or anything belonging to it."

"What does she say about giving up the place?" demanded the bride, sharply. "Elder brother! you never told me you had an elder brother."

"No," answered Miss Jamesina, resolved to give vent to some part of the venom with which she overflowed, "I dare say not; and perhaps the news that Colonel Ross, the rightful possessor of this estate, is returned from the Indies, and that he has a daughter to inherit his fortune, is as strange to him as it seems to you, men."

"Eleonora, my dear," she continued, turning to the young lady, who at this moment entered the room, followed by her father, "Eleonora, my dear, come here and be introduced to your uncle and your aunt. Mr. Murdoch, I have the pleasure to introduce to your love and regard the young heiress of Kelpfield," taking Eleonora's hand as she spoke, and putting it into that of her uncle; "but what's the matter?" observing that the disconcerted bridegroom was mute. "Here's the colonel come to make you sure of the fact. Come, colonel, speak for yourself, and welcome Mr. and Mrs. Murdoch Ross to your own house."

Miss Jamesina, a little revived by the vexation she imparted to others, took manifest satisfaction in the humiliation of her faithless admirer.

"My dear Murdoch!" said Colonel Ross, unconscious of all which had just passed.

"My dear brother, how happy I am to see you! Now that you are come, I have all the relations whom death has spared round me for the evening of life."

Murdoch Ross, though a vain and selfish man, was not so utterly devoid of natural affec-

tion as not to return the pressure of his brother's hand with sincerity, when he saw him whom he had long considered as dead actually standing before him. This burst of feeling, though sincere for the moment, was not of long continuance, when he recollected that his brother's presence deprived him of the estate upon which he had so much valued himself, and that of his daughter of all hopes, even at a future period; but the momentary joy which he had experienced saved his generous-minded brother from the pain of suspecting the thoughts of a mercenary mind.

Jamesina, controlled by Colonel Ross's presence, did not venture the remarks with which she had a malicious pleasure in tormenting the new-married pair, but when she could find an opportunity of doing so without his observation; and then she persecuted "Mrs. Murdoch," as she made a point of calling her, with a detail of all "the improvements Mr. Murdoch, when he thought himself the laird, had intended to make; but you see, Mrs. Murdoch," she continued, "things do not turn out always in this troublesome world just as we would have them; and, though it was very natural for you to be pleased at the thoughts of having such a good house to come to, all ready furnished to your hand, yet do not be cast down; I dare say it will be possible to get some snug little place at no great distance; and the colonel, who is always kind and generous, will send his carriage to bring you here often, for I suppose *now* Mr. Murdoch will not keep the fine new carriage he brought from London with him: indeed, I am sure his brother is so generous that he will give him the full price it cost, as he needs it for his young heiress: and then, you know, Mrs. Murdoch, you will sometimes have the use of it."

"I'll tell you what," answered the bride, "once for all, Miss Jamesina, if Mr. Ross cannot afford to keep the carriage for me, I can keep it for myself: Miss Taylor, of Moorfields, has not been accustomed to walk or to ride upon Highland ponies not bigger than dogs, with her feet dragging in the dirt, as some people here do," she said, with a malicious glance at Jamesina's well-splashed riding-skirt.

"I am mighty glad to hear it, indeed, Mrs. Murdoch; and if, as ye say, ye have a fortune yourself, ye'll need to care the less about Mr. Murdoch, who, in the indulgence of his fine taste, had perhaps gone something through his ready money; but, as ye have a fortune of your own, you'll be the more independent. Indeed, he was a wise man, Mrs. Murdoch, and it wad seem as if he had the second sight just to go to London and bring down a wife wi' a fortune, at a time when the rents o' Inchbraken will no be forthcoming to make up all deficiencies."

All this passed off very well with Jamesina, while she had the malevolent satisfaction of thwarting two people whom she detested; but when she was alone in her own apartment, tears of spite and vexation forced themselves unbidden from her eyes: to be slighted and scorned by Murdoch Ross, and to be laughed at and ridiculed by his wife, while she was pitied by every one else in the house, was more than her philosophy, practical as it was, could stand.

"He, the false, heartless traitor that he is! could not be satisfied with sneaking away when he found that I was not the heiress of Fernbraes, but he must tell a hundred lies, and bring this senseless London gowk of a wife to triumph over me.

And to tell me how high I stood in her husband's esteem, forsooth! but I think I was even with her; I think I brought down her pride a little. It becomes the like o' her, made up of ends o' lace and bits of riband, to compare herself to a sensible, managing, clever woman like me, though I say it that shouldna say it, that's fit to buy and sell a dozen o' her the best day she ever saw, and she no ken that she was sold. I think I wad hae gone distracted on the very spot if his eldest brother hadna been here, as if on purpose to gie me the power o' turning the tables upon them. It's no six weeks gone, in this very house, that he praised my taste up to the very skies, and now to think o' his taking that butterfly cratur to mock at me: it's no to be borne! and me in such a situation, too; for it's no to be supposed that I'll be well at Fernbraes after Malcolm brings home a new mistress: my uncle will not be able to see the light o' day for her, and where will I be? If I am in no favour wi' him, its vain to think o' Hugh, who never liked me, and, thick-sculled as he is, it only keeps a fair show because he thinks I am all in all wi' our uncle: and then Farquhar Shiftwell—what am I to do wi' him? Was ever poor girl so ill used and tormented! But I'll no sit tamely down under it all—I'll no bear to see them all ride over my neck this gate."

CHAPTER XLVI.

"There's not a wretch that lives on common charity
But's happier than I: for I have known
The luscious sweets of plenty;
Yet now my hopes must fall, like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossoms 'scaped, yet's withered in the ripening."
Venice Preserved.

WHILE this mood lasted, Jamesina next morning mounted her despised Highland pony, and rode home to Fernbraes on pretence of giving orders about something she had forgotten. During her stay there she was surprised by another visit from Mr. Shiftwell, who, having perfect intelligence of all that passed about her, thought, to use his own elegant expression, "that it would be wise to strike the iron while it was hot."

"You have had time, Miss Jamesina," he said, "like a sensible woman as ye are, to consider of the proposal I made when I had last the pleasure to converse with you in this room, and I am now come for your answer."

This plain, business-like statement she affected to take as a joke. "Ye are a queer man, Mr. Shiftwell, that thinks of speaking to ladies in their first mourning, wi' their weepers on, about things of the kind."

"Miss Jamesina, it is but right and fair that we should understand one another, and come to the point at once, which I take to be this: I, Farquhar Shiftwell, want to marry you, Jamesina Sinclair, and you, Jamesina Sinclair, want, if ye can without appearing to do it, to slip through my fingers; but it's right to set the matter before you, and then ye'll see if the end is worth the cost."

Jamesina felt alarmed by the steady purpose of his manner, and saw at once that he was perfectly sure of his ground, else he would never have dared to talk to her in such a fashion; but she was caught in her own trap, and forced to be humble.

"I have known you for many a year, Miss

Jamesina, and thought ye wad suit me for a wife : and noo that your family is compromised by the conduct of your late father—" (Jamesina became red and then white, but said nothing), "and, farther, that ye have put yourself in the power of the law, if this sum, taken from your late father's drawers, comes to be spoken of, I thought that I would suit you for a husband, particularly as others have provided for themselves."

Jamesina was ready to burst with indignation, but he was resolved not to see it, and went on calmly. "My regard for you, Miss Jamesina, made me think (for nobody has a higher respect for your talents), that as all the changes that have taken place and will come to pass cannot make things just so agreeable to your wishes—and when ye were mistress here yourself—for it's no pleasant for any one to have a young lady to be mistress over their nose—I thought that though my poor house was no exactly what ye have been accustomed to, I wad offer it to you, thinking that ye wad be more comfortable as the mistress there, than waiting at the beck of any other body."

Jamesina felt the full drift of this terrifying harangue, and her usual courage for a moment forsook her. "Ye canna mean to say, Mr. Shiftwell, that ye would betray the confidence I have always placed in you?"

"No, certainly, if ye are my wife; but otherwise law and justice must take their course."

The frightful words operated an instant change.

"But my uncle, Mr. Shiftwell, and my brother, they will never be brought to gi' their consent."

"Then do not ask it."

"But, Mr. Shiftwell, it passes the bounds of possibility that I should disgrace my family by taking a hiding step of that kind without their consent, and it's what I can never be brought to think o'. Be fair and honourable, Mr. Shiftwell; just ask my uncle's consent, and if ye get that, I'll no say ye nay."

"Na, na, Miss Jamesy! he's no a wise man that would try to mount the brae when he could turn the shuther; and as to talking o' disgracing your family, ye ken there's no need indeed to think o' that, after a' that's come and gone, unless ye want me, indeed, to be fair and honourable wi' your uncle, and tell him all that has happened; and, noo that ye put it in my head, I'm no sure but it wad be the wisest plan. I wad maybe get his consent and thanks into the bargain."

The speaker stopped to see what effect this new threat would produce. He knew it was one he dared not put into execution; mean as he was, he had still been able to conceive an idea of Fernbraes near enough to the truth to make him sensible that such conduct would not go unpunished; but he knew also poor Jamesina's need of secrecy, and spared not to make her sensible how much she was within his power.

"Ye little ken my uncle, if ye hae a thought o' that kind, Mr. Shiftwell; and if ye'll tak my advice, ye'll no try it."

"I'm ay willing to please you, ye ken, Miss Jamesina, in a' that's reasonable; and if, to make a long matter short, for ye ken that it must be, ye'll gie me your solemn promise in black and white, I'll no say anything more about it, but what is bygone will gang wi' me to the grave, and ye'll live in honour and credit. Maybe some of your kin, wha holds up their heads so high just noo, will mak the best o' it when the thing is passed, and just draw in their chair, and

eat a finnan haddie wi' us when they come to Aberdeen, and some o' the rest will no hae the pleasure o' seeing ye dependant upon others, as ye are now."

Stimulated by this idea, Jamesina took up a pen and gave the wished-for promise; Mr. Shiftwell, satisfied that he had carried his point, prudently took his leave, knowing that, though there might be a few struggles, the field was his.

"And is it come to this?" thought Jamesina, after her future protector had left her. "Have I really signed a paper to deliver myself over like butter or cheese into the hands of Farquhar Shiftwell, auld Donald Fox's clerk, a cratur I suppose that never had ony parents—at least none that I ever heard o'. Is all my plotting and planning come to this? I have, if wad seem, put so many irons into the fire, that they hae put out the fire itsel at last, and all the odium will fa' upon me. Me, that has been held up as a patron to young women far and near, to be necessitate to mak mysel a laughing-stock to a' the haverels in the country by rinnin awa wi' Farquhar Shiftwell. They may weel say I was desperate when I did that: a bonny-like cratur to rin awa wi'. Mony a one that I hae hauden doon will rejoice to find such a flaw; but I'll no be here to hear a' that will be said about it; as he said, I'll be glad to win to Aberdeen, or ony gate out o' their hearing. Oh! it's no this way that I thought o' being married! Another sort o' figure Murdoch wad hae made in his bonny green coat before a minister, to that snuffy body in his auld blacks and gray worsted stockings, wi' a brown wig on his head. I wad na wonder to see a pen sticking out from behind the lug o' him: and I'm to promise to honour and obey the like o' him—me, that never obeyed anybody in this warld; and, whatever I think, I daurna say a word to him; I maun be as meek as pussy, or he'll talk o' the county-jail to me. Sorrow fa' the time that I ever took him into my secrets!"

Decent Mr. Shiftwell was, on his part, quite satisfied with the point to which he had brought the affair; he considered, like many other philosophers, that the necessity of existing circumstances would do the rest; that, as Miss Jamesina neither dared to deceive or disappoint him, fixed as she was by the terrors of the law, he might trust to her knowledge of her own interest for the rest. He, as has been seen, had for years acted the confidential agent in all her little iniquitous gains; the secrecy with which she placed these sums from time to time in his hands at first excited the suspicions of his mind, which Nature had in many respects made the exact counterpart of her own; he watched attentively, and found that his fair client was engaged in a regular course of plunder, which, by their mutual good management, soon augmented to a pretty considerable sum in his hands. Still there was no delinquency sufficient to place her within his reach, and he maintained a most respectful silence. He calculated upon his own unceasing subservency rendering him necessary to her as she advanced in years, and his expectations increased while her wealth grew.

"Let her wait a few years yet," he thought, "and for all her pride and her family, she'll maybe be glad yet to sit down at Farquhar Shiftwell's fireside."

Her father's atrocious conduct brought his plots to a more speedy termination.

"The fear of exposing what he had done will make her consent to anything I like to offer;"

and in this certainty he set forth to make preparation in a style something different from that generally observed on such occasions.

It happened that he had seen in his old master's possession the marriage contract between Stoneyards and Miss M'Alpin, which provided for the younger children; and as soon as Jamesina produced her bag, containing a sum so much beyond it, he was, from his knowledge of her habits, fully satisfied of the way it had come there. Her change of colour assured him that he was right, and furnished him with authority over her from which it was impossible she could escape. He could never expect the consent of her uncle and brother to a marriage with him, but that was a matter of little consequence.

"When the deed is done," he thought, "they will be forced to make the best of it, and if they wad na disgrace her, they maun uphau'd me. I'll be out of the country for a while to let their wrath cool, and when I come back a' will be forgotten, and I'll haud up my head amang the best o' them; her fortune will help me weel on, and it will gang hard wi' me but I find ways and means to mak them do the rest. I wad like that this job could have been managed without the rinnin' awa, which will be a fine tale to tell amang a' the writer-lads in the office. The best way will be to settle a' for my moving first, and then Jamesy and I just to make a moonlight sitting o' it."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
I will overbear you will;
For in the temple, by and-by with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
* * * * * Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity."
Midsummer Night's Dream.

MR. MURDOCH ROSS had declared his intention to purchase any place in the neighbourhood which might suit him, and to which he was determined to give his favourite appellation of Kelpfield, discarded by his brother, who also wished to restore "all the tasty furniture," as Mrs. Murdoch called it, to their rightful possessor.

Jamesina, who never lost an opportunity of making this charming pair feel their change of circumstances, made her entrance one morning into the dining-room after the whole family were seated at breakfast. "I hope I have no made anybody wait," she said; "but if I have, it's all to help you, Mr. Murdoch. I was just hearing of a snug bit place to sell, which wad suit you particular well: it was built by some corky head from London, who wanted what he called a 'snug box' for the shooting. Boxes is what ye ca' your houses near the city, Mrs. Murdoch, is no it? and this a' painted green, and yellow, and pink, just, they tell me, to suit your London taste; an' there's room in it, Mr. Murdoch, for the Venus, and the shepherdess, wi' the flock o' gold-fishes, and a' the rest; and ye can ca' it Kelpfield, ye ken, now that this place has got back its auld name of Inchbraken."

"If the place were large enough, it might suit," said Murdoch.

"If it's built by a Londoner, I am sure it's in high state," answered his wife; "they are the only people who have any idea of comfort."

"As ye say, Mrs. Murdoch, it's more com-

fortable to be in a place of one's own, though a should be never so little, rather than in a fine place like this, which belongs to another."

"La! Mr. Ross, we had better go and see it."

"Do that—do that," continued the pertinacious Jamesina; "and dinna forget to look out for a warm stand for the Venus."

"I know the place that Jamesina is talking about very well," said Fernbraes, "but I never heard it was to sell: what makes the man part with it before he has ever inhabited it?"

"He finds himself no just so rich as he thought, I fancy, uncle—that happens to mony a one, ye ken—what's dreed for a' folks comes to pass. Did ye ken o' a prophecy in your family, colonel, before ye let them cut that pine that I saw as I came through the policy this morning?"

"I do not know to what you allude, Miss Sinclair," answered Colonel Ross. "I did not know that our house was of importance sufficient to have a prophecy attached to it."

"How droll that is! but ye have fulfilled it, though: is na it, Mr. Murdoch, that

"When at Inchbraken they cut the first pine,
'Twill pass from the male to the female line?"

It's funny, is na it, that the cornal, who canna bear to hae a tree cuttit, should, the very first thing that he does, cut, without minding it, one of the very trees that ye, who were so fond o' hewing and felling, wadna hae put a hatchet upon for your life? but, as I said before, we canna pass our fate."

"A good Hindoo maxim that, Jamesina; but I believe there are other people in the world who think that we come into it with our misis on our foreheads, if they do not say it in the same words."

Fortunately, the "shooting-box" suited the tastes of Mr. and Mrs. Murdoch Ross, who considered that they could easily display their own by the addition of wings, which would make it all that could be desired for the residence of a genteel family; and, to be upon the spot, the purchase was no sooner made than they took their departure from Inchbraken to commence operations.

Jamesina was a little provoked with what she called "the cornal's folly," in sending all the beautiful pea-green and rose furniture for Mrs. Murdoch's use; "less might serve her, indeed," she said; "but your eldest brother, Robina, is just like my uncle—himself is the last person he thinks of."

"Never mind, Jamesy," said Fernbraes, who just then joined the two ladies, "do not regret these fineries; I have been this moment writing to London to have new furniture for Fernbraes; with the exception of my own private apartments, Miss Robina, I'll new furnish every bit of it."

"And that, too," thought Jamesina, "just at the moment I am going to leave it: was ever anything so unlucky? but wi' me a' things hae taken a turn."

"Though I thought everything very well for me, Miss Robina," Fernbraes continued, "just as my grandfather left it, yet I would like to have things in another way for our young bride; and I have ordered a service of china and plate for the table, Jamesy: ye'll like that?"

"It's more than ye wad ever do for me though, ye ken, uncle, often as I have asked ye to do it."

"That's true, Jamesy; but this is for your brother's young wife, ye ken."

choose for herself; and I am not so ungrateful, Eleonora, as to murmur, though her choice may have fallen very contrary to all our inclinations."

"Do not blame her now, Malcolm," replied Eleonora, "when every one is joined against her; for my part, I think she is greatly to be pitied."

"You must confess," joined Mrs. Murdoch, "that it was a little provoking for Miss Sinclair to see all her friends choosing for themselves, without thought of her—he! he! he! I hope, though," she continued, speaking aside to Miss Robina, "we shall have the lovely Mrs. Shiftwell soon back among us; I shall not be easy until I return her kind compliments to me on my arrival."

"Let us say no more on the subject, Mrs. Ross," answered Robina; "you know it cannot be pleasant to our good Malcolm and his worthy uncle: let us think and talk of what will be more agreeable to us all."

Nothing farther occurred to derange their projected plans: the most gallant bonfire that had ever been seen in the country for a hundred years blazed on its wonted site; and Colonel Ross had the satisfaction of giving away his daughter, and Fernbraes of standing father to his dear Malcolm and to Barbara on the day which joined the ancient houses of M'Alpin and Ross, and made the excellent proprietor of Fernbraes rejoice in having fulfilled his determination to take upon himself the character of "The Nabob at Home."

THE END

THE

BANKER'S WIFE;

OR,

Court and City.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHRESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "MRS. ARMYTAGE," &c., &c.

1843

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1843.

THE BANKER'S WIFE;

ON,

COURT AND CITY.

CHAPTER I.

Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom, that suggest,
By every pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart.

COWPER.

A LOVER of the picturesque, whether poet, painter, or simply an enjoyer of Nature's works, may be justified, perhaps, in extending his quest after the sublime and beautiful beyond the limits of the rich but monotonous landscapes of Old England. But, while the indented shores of Naples or cloud-capt mountains of Switzerland attract these dreamy wanderers to fill their albums and sketch-books with sonnets in sixteen lines, or daubings in bistre and cobalt, a notable counter-charm is produced on the minds of foreign tourists in our own country by the neatness, order, and fertility of our rural districts.

Scarcely a county but boasts its series of cheerful villages and aristocratic residences, from the stately Gothic hall of earlier centuries to the commodious family mansion of modern times, surrounded by spreading parks and trimly gardens; nor is it easy to travel ten miles in England without passing the lodge-gates of some private domain, unmentioned save in the obscure annals of county-history, which, if the summer residence of some German principcule, would be signalized to tourists with all the descriptive pomp of a guide-book, or the onerous eloquence of the *valet de place*.

If, for instance, as a stranger in the land, you stop to dine or sleep at the little country inn of Ovington, and inquire of mine host of the Burlington Arms whether the neighbourhood contain any object of interest, he will answer, with a stultified look, that there is "nothing thereabouts worth speaking on."

"There's the Hyde, an old place as 'longs to the Vernon family; and Squire Hamlyn's, at Dean Park; besides, sir, Rudger Burlinton's farther up along the river; but none on 'em show-places; and the gentry as likes to visit grand houses be forced to cut across the country, to Burleigh, or Belvoir."

Nevertheless, these three domains—the Hyde, Burlington Manor, and Dean Park—are severally citable as models of rural beauty; the neighbourhood which, within a circle of fifteen miles, comprehends the three properties in question, affording a favourable type of that rich and smiling order of home-landscape which seems almost to embody a portraiture of our social institutions: nothing salient—nothing discordant—a limited horizon—a pleasant foreground, with symbols of peace and prosperity interposing between, and abundant evergreens to plant out the

offices, in order to gratify the taste of those who care less whether Lazarus be sitting furnished and suffering at their gates, than that the gates should be of sufficient solidity to exclude the spectacle of so piteous an object.

The parish of Ovington is, in short, a beautiful country; watered by a fine river, prospered by a fertile soil, unmolested by commercial speculation, undisturbed by factories, unvulgarized by villas; a country such as George Robins would have delighted to describe in his largest capitals and most sonorous periods, had either of the noble mansions in question fallen, at any moment, under the branding-iron of his pen or hammer.

At the period to which the reader's attention is humbly requested, the fairest of these estates had of late narrowly escaped this degrading contingency. For nearly a year it had remained an undecided point among the executors of the late Sir Roger Burlington, whether Burlington Manor should be sold outright, to pay off the mortgages on the Yorkshire property of his son (a minor, scarcely past the age of infancy), or whether the place should be let on lease for a term of twenty-one years.

The latter alternative carried the day; thanks, as it was believed, to the advocacy of the most zealous of the guardians, Mr. Hamlyn of Dean Park, whose estate adjoined, and who was supposed to tremble at the idea of seeing the Burlington property fall into the hands of some moneyed speculator, disposed to turn to account the facilities of the fine stream traversing the two properties. A respectable and quiet neighbour, secured by his own interference, was a most important object to him; and it was probably an argument of some weight with his co-executors and trustees, that, precisely at the right moment, he was able to produce the one man needful, in the person of a wealthy colonel of the East India Company's Engineering Service, recently returned from Bombay.

Richard Hamlyn was one of those fortune-favoured individuals who seem born with a knack for producing the right thing at the right moment. Though qualified by the innkeeper of Ovington as "Squire Hamlyn," there was little enough of the "Squire" in the estate proprietor of Dean Park. He was simply a London banker; a cold, methodical, prudent man, taking as much pride in his country-seat as the engrossing nature of a thriving business allowed him to take in anything out of Lombard-street, but eager, as a matter of interest, to secure his property against the deterioration of manufacturing innovation. With the terror of steam-engines or spinning-jennies before his eyes, it was a

comfort, indeed, to find such a man as his friend Colonel Hamilton established, for the rest of his life, at Burlington Manor.

The new tenant had been for years a valued constituent of the banking-house of Hamlyn and Co., and, on arriving in England, it was to Richard, the acting partner, his correspondent for twenty years past, that he addressed himself, as a friend and counsellor, in matters even of more personal interest than the investment of his lacs of rupees.

Though he had passed nearly half a century in banishment, Colonel Hamilton had been driven home from India several years before the epoch he had mentally fixed for his return—the completion of a fortune of four hundred thousand pounds!—by the loss of his wife, and a severe illness (the first in his life) consequent upon this heartfelt bereavement. But the moment he set foot on his native soil, and cast the slough engendered by a long life of slavery to Mammon, the old man became reconciled to leave the cipher of his fortune at three hundred and forty-two thousand; deciding that, at sixty-five years of age, it was better to content himself with these ample means of enjoyment; for, having outlived his two sons, who left no posterity to inherit his fine fortune, he had to choose between bequeathing his property to distant relatives, or earning a posthumous statue and newspaper renown from the gratitude of some public institution.

A London banker is not the man to refuse his friendship or advice to an heirless old gentleman, with a floating capital of hundreds of thousands. Cold and mechanical as were Mr. Hamlyn's habits of life, he put himself almost out of his way to seek a suitable London residence for Colonel Hamilton, the moment he began to complain of the hot rooms and cold draughtway of the hotel in the Adelphi to which he had resorted on his arrival, as the only one still extant which he remembered as a boy. Many were "the substantial town mansions" which Mr. Hamlyn commended to the notice of the nabob for the remainder of the season. But the old gentleman, with his over-brimming purse and indefinite purposes, like a sailor returned from a cruise in a hurry to get rid of his prize-money, was determined to purchase. As if he could not make too much haste in securing himself a footing in his native country, he concluded a hasty bargain for a commodious house in Portland Place, and for some weeks amused himself and enriched the upholsterers by the effort of furnishing.

But so soon as was all arranged, on what appeared to his friends the Hamlyns the most comfortable and liberal footing, than the colonel, for want of farther occupation, began to grumble. Day after day did he make his appearance at their house in Cavendish Square, with some complaint against the climate or customs of the metropolis!

Luckily, he was far from a peevish grumbler. He was a laughing, rather than a crying philosopher; and bantered his own fastidiousness so good-humouredly, that Mrs. Hamlyn, to whom, during the absence of her husband in the city, his complaints were usually confided, was far more amused than wearied by his Chapter of Lamentations.

"Between ourselves, my good lady," said he, after ensconcing himself in an armchair by the fireside one gloomy morning in January, when

the leafless trees in Cavendish Square looked as grim and ghastly through the fog as the spectral forms of Ossian's heroes, "between ourselves, I own myself plausibly disappointed in this London of yours! The first few days in any country are a sad take in, more especially in one's native land, after fifty years' absence. The excitement of finding one's self among fellow-creatures of one's own creed and complexion, and hearing spoken around one the language of one's boyhood—the language in which one's parents pronounced their blessing on one's head at parting—is apt to bring tears into one's eyes that blind them to other matters. At first I thought I could never see enough of busy, prosperous London; and I vow to my Maker there were moments when I could have found it in my heart to kneel down and kiss the sooty earth under my feet (old blockhead that I was!), because it was that of Old England. But, at a week's end, ma'am, I began to see clearer. After I'd been knocked about a bit, and jessed by the Cockneys every time I ventured to ask a question, or put my nose out of doors in a coat or waistcoat differing in cut from those of the weakly fashion-mongers, I recognised the folly of giving way to such warm emotions among a race of folks who dare not yield to a single natural impulse, from fear of what their finer neighbours may be thinking of 'em!"

"It is true, the forms of social life are somewhat rigidly maintained among us," observed the banker's wife, stitching placidly on at her monotonous carpet-work.

"Rigidly, indeed, for a country that calls itself the Land of Liberty!" retorted the old colonel. "I'd as soon live in a waxwork show as among such stuffed puppets as this sort of formality engenders—men in buckram—men in armour—that is, men of straw! Your good husband (who has my interests at heart as if they were his own) finds me a mighty stubborn scholar, I fancy, in the grand art of modern politeness!"

"Mr. Hamlyn has, I am sure, sincere pleasure in any little service he may be able to render you!" replied his companion, without raising her eyes from her work.

"I believe you—I really believe you; only we differ, maybe, in our notions of service. My friend Hamlyn thinks it a matter of kindness to be always setting me right about little idle, empty, fussy ceremonies of society, concerning which, 'tween you and I, my dear ma'am, I care not a button! When I propose anything he thinks out of the common, by way of making those about me comfortable or myself happy, he's sure to remind me that 'such is not the custom of this country,' or that 'his contrary to the usages of the world.' Bless your heart! I've lived too long where the usages of the world were of no account, to submit patiently to the thraldom of a network of copper-lace and spangles! God forbid I should behave myself like a Hottentot! But I can't fancy that Hamlyn's favourite 'world' would have gone on a jot the worse had you brought your girls to dine with me on Tuesday, or if I'd persisted in giving up my back parlour for the use of my man Johnston and his wife, who in India were not used to mope away their days in cellars!"

"But you have, such a capital housekeeper's room in Portland Place," remonstrated Mrs. Hamlyn, subdued by the force of habit into unquestioning acquiescence in the opinions of her

Amelia. "With respect to my daughters, as Mr. Hamlyn mentioned to you before, they are not out. Lydia is little more than sixteen; her sister two years younger. Both are still in the schoolroom. They do not even dine at our own table."

"So much the worse, ma'am, so much the worse; one of the very things I complain of! Little more than sixteen, indeed! Why, in lady she'd be a wife by this time; perhaps a mother. And not allowed to share the meals of her parents? not permitted to dine with her father's old friend? Always with the governess—always at her studies! What's the use of such excess of education for young ladies, pray, unless to teach 'em to play their parts prettily in society? And how the deuce is a girl ever to learn to become a woman, if excluded from the company of gentlemen and ladies till, without knowing her cue, the curtain suddenly draws up, and she finds herself alone upon the stage?"

"The late hours Mr. Hamlyn is obliged to keep," observed the banker's wife, careful not to admit how far more closely her ideas of happiness and propriety agreed with those of the warm-hearted colonel than those of her austere husband, "would scarcely be advantageous to the girls. With respect to having declined your kind invitation, had they dined in Portland Place, my own family, which is numerous, would have claimed the same exception in their favour."

"Ay, ay, ay! it all sounds mighty plausible and Mrs. Goodchild-ish!" interrupted the colonel, shrugging his shoulders. "But the long and the short of these wise regulations is, that such rule-and-compass work in the bosom of families is making away with everything like warmth of feeling, and shrivelling up social interest into a manual of etiquette. Household happiness is too joyous a thing, ma'am, to be worked by steam. I vow to my Maker I'd as soon live in a penitentiary, and be rung in to meals and exercise like a felon, as be cramped up eternally in my loves and likings by a code of heartless decorum."

"I trust your kind feelings towards my girls are not likely to be cramped by the methodical habits of the family?" observed Mrs. Hamlyn, with a smile.

"That's more than I'll take upon me to say. What will these poor children ever care about me, pray, whom they're called away from their forte-piano once a week to courtesy to, and hope I'm well, and whom they never see in the exercise of human charities? I'm disappointed, my dear ma'am—I'm sadly disappointed! I've no family left of my own, the more's the pity; and, being fond of young people, 'twas a comfort to me, in returning to this country, to think of surrounding myself with innocent, happy faces—if not those of my own kith and kin, at least the kith and kin of my friends. And what's the end on't? I vow to my Maker I'm not more lonesome in my bungalow at Ghazerpore, than in my fine, showy, comfortable, comfortless house in Portland Place! Most of my acquaintance in London are men of business, tied down to their occupations; and as to the ladies, my friend Hamlyn gave me a broad hint 't'other night, over our claret, that 'tisn't the custom of what he calls the world for gentlemen to indulge in too frequent morning calls—"

"Be assured," interrupted Mrs. Hamlyn, for once raising her eyes from her work, "that my

husband intended no allusion to his own house or family in the prohibition."

"I know it, my dear good lady, I know it. If you'd allowed me to finish my sentence, I was going to add, 'except in the case of so warm a friendship and intimacy as unites ourselves,'"

And so you see the consequence of this last piece of schooling of Hamlyn's will be to trouble you twice as often with my company. He well knows you are the only folks in London with whom I'm on anything like a friendly footing; and at the snail's-pace rate at which acquaintances are made in this confounded foggy metropolis, I shall have leisure to die and be catatombed in one or t'other of the new cemeteries, long afore I've brought myself to more than a distant bow with my next-door neighbours."

"The vast extension of society in London," observed Mrs. Hamlyn, her habitual serenity unruffled by the vehemence of her companion, "has necessitated a degree of caution in the formation of intimacy which, to persons habituated to the sociability of a colony, may appear coldness and reserve. But an intimacy, once created, soon ripens into friendship; and the friendship, once really matured, ripens and brings forth fruit, an inheritance from generation to generation."

"So much the better for those who've patience to wait so long. But my heart's not like an aloe, my dear ma'am, that wants a hundred years to bring it into bloom; and I've learned, to my cost, that a winter in London (which in India we're apt to fancy the summum bonum of human sociability) is about as cheerful a thing as a judgship two thousand miles up the country, or a solitary detachment in the Ghatts."

"Winter is generally admitted to be an unsocial moment in London," said Mrs. Hamlyn, quietly. "Most people who have family seats spend their Christmas in the country. This is the first winter I have passed in town for the last ten years."

"And how came you to pass it here?" demanded the matter-of-fact old gentleman.

Mrs. Hamlyn was busy picking up her scissors, and did not hear. But the colonel, who seldom asked questions except with the view of obtaining information, reiterated his interrogation.

"Mr. Hamlyn fancied, I believe," replied the lady, thus forced to an ungracious explanation, "that you would find it dull if left in town without a single family of your acquaintance."

Grateful conviction glistened in Colonel Hamilton's eyes as he replied: "And so, then, you're all doing penance in London for my sake? That was monstrously kindly thought of on Hamlyn's part," added he, after a moment's consideration. "To be sure, if dull and lonesome now, I should have been fit to hang myself when you were all off to Warwickshire. Poor girls!—poor young ladies, I should have said—I understand now why Miss Lydia complained to me 't'other day of the tediousness of parading, morning after morning, round and round yonder square like a squirrel in a cage. But I didn't guess, poor little lady, that I was the cause of moping her up, away from her pony and her country pleasures. Well! I shall always think 'twas a monstrous friendly sacrifice on the part of Hamlyn."

"My husband is not able to enjoy much of his time at Dean Park," replied the veracious wife. "He can seldom spare more than an oc-

casual Saturday and Sunday, and a week or two at Easter and Christmas."

"And why the deuce couldn't he take me with him, then, to spend Christmas in the country?"

"I heard him speak of your having important business to wind up at the India House."

"True—very true! Hamlyn's such a steady, thoughtful dog, where business is concerned!"

"Mr. Hamlyn fancied, too, you might be disinclined to move, so shortly after settling yourself in your charming house in Portland Place."

"My dear lady, I should be mighty glad to turn my back on my *charming* house in Portland Place! To tell you the honest truth, I'm sick to death of the sight of those eternal damask curtains and rosewood tables! What interest have I in Lon'on? I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me. I look out at my windows half the day, like a chained dog from its kennel, at the houses of my opposite neighbours, whose very names I don't know from Adam, except in the Court Guide, and who'd think me an impertinent old fellow if I chucked their little ones under the chin on meeting them in my morning's walk!"

Mrs. Hamlyn uttered a civil sort of half-discontent murmur.

"And when evening draws on, and my house is shut in for the night," resumed the colonel, "with nobody but poor Pincher and me to keep each other company, I sometimes ask myself what crime I've committed to be thus condemned to a solitary cell, and whether I'm really at home, and really in the Old England that calls itself so hospitable!"

"You are surely dwelling on the *dark* side of the picture, my dear sir!" said Mrs. Hamlyn.

"I wish you'd show me the bright one. Such desperate long evenings! Spin out one's dinner and one's claret as one will, they *can't* last forever; and though Johnston reads the Courier over to me once, and I read it to myself all over again the moment he goes down to supper, I've a hard matter to make it out till bedtime. If it wasn't a shame to rouse poor Goody Johnston out of her armchair, I should sometimes send for her to make my tea; but as to taking out servants and horses in such weather, for half an hour's gossip or whist at my club, I haven't the heart to do it—and that's the truth."

"But why not spend your evenings with us?" demanded Mrs. Hamlyn, in all sincerity.

"Why, so I do, as often as my conscience will allow. I'm aware, of course, that poor Hamlyn would far rather enjoy his leisure undisturbed, with his wife and family, than be taken up at backgammon, night after night, by a tiresome old fellow, always pumping him for news, and with none to offer in return. Why, my dear ma'am! even Quiddle, the apothecary, shirks me, when I lay an embargo on him more than twice a week! Though I make the most of my rheumatics, purely to secure half an hour's chit-chat with him of an afternoon—when I try to coax him into stopping dinner, forsooth, he puts on a demure, family-man-ish sort of face, and tells me, 'Mrs. Q. is expecting him at home!'"

Mrs. Hamlyn inclined her face closer over her work to conceal an involuntary smile at this desolate picture of the situation of a man of fifteen thousand a year, thrown over by an uxorious apothecary. But scarcely had the smile arisen ere it subsided to sadness. Well

did she remember the time when, on her translation from her own cheerful home to the cold, formal household of the banker in Cavendish Square, she felt nearly as lonely as the old Indian. Habit had become second nature to her. She was now tamed down into apathy by the long, uneventful mornings, and tedium *à-la-dites* completing the day; and though few women would have more enjoyed unrestrained intercourse with her children, she had long resigned herself to the methodical order imposed by the banker, of seeing them at stated periods decreed by the wisdom of the head-nurse and governess, so as not to interfere with the clock-work arrangements of their meals, exercise, and education. For the rigid man of business, accustomed to regard regularity as the mainspring of affairs, carried his system of arithmetical exactitude into all the details of private life. Profound sympathy arose accordingly in the bosom of Mrs. Hamlyn, as she reflected how thoroughly she had subdued her own impulses of feeling, and silenced her own repinings; while the gray-headed man before her, though his threescore years were accomplished, had his lesson yet to learn.

"I cannot help fearing, my dear sir," she observed, at the close of a few moments' silence, "that you have been precipitate in settling in town. In the country, the bond of good neighbourhood still subsists. In the country, you would have found interests in your property to occupy your time. I sadly fear you will never be quite happy in town."

"By George, I'm beginning to think so too!" cried Colonel Hamilton; "though, to be sure, in Indy, the thing I used to dread most for my old age was the seclusion of a lonesome country-house. Between ourselves, my dear ma'am, I've had enough and to spare of my own company. Mine has been a curious life. I married for love. I'll tell you the whole story some day or another, when I'm in better spirits: suffice it now that I married for love. Nothing very wonderful in *that*, you'll say; but you may perhaps account it worth mention that thirty years of wedded life didn't lessen the mutual affection which first instigated the imprudence. Mary and I had but one head and heart between us. We lived in a remote district, wholly out of reach of society, and so never fretted after it, or anything else. No little mortifications or heart-burnings to create unkind feelings on either side; no meddlesome friends to make mischief; nobody to confide in but each other; nobody to dress for, talk for, think for, feel for, pretend for, but each other. Life lay plain and straight afore us. All our object was to be frugal and grow rich as quick as we could, that we might return to our native country, and enjoy ourselves with our children."

"We had four—poorthings!—who were packed off to Europe to be reared and educated, which was our only trouble. But there was no remedy, and people soon reconcile themselves to what is irremediable. Mary and I loved each other only the more when thus left alone together. Our two girls died young: one of 'em on her passage home, the other a year or two afterward. But the boys thrived and prospered; and a great joy it was to their mother and me to watch the progress of the fortune which, some day or other, was to make us all happy and comfortable together. I had a fine appointment. In those days, ma'am, the pagoda-tree hadn't

"been shaken too roughly, and there were still ways and means whereby an honest man might make a princely fortune in Indy, and Indy none the worse for't. I had the roads and tanks of a whole district to create; and was lucky enough to create myself, at the same time, a prime favourite with the rajah.

"Like an ass as I was, however, the first hundred thousand pounds I had the luck to scrape together, I deposited with a company of native merchants; and when Mrs. Hamilton and I, moderate in our desires, determined to come home and rejoin our children, these fellows, though not in a state of insolvency, were so situated that to realize my funds was impossible. So I was even forced to stay and look after them. Fortunately, my roads and tanks wanted looking after too. By way of compensation, the rajah doubled my salary from the company, and so my fortune went on increasing and increasing, and as the appetite for money is said to increase by what it feeds on, we only grew the more sparing for growing richer. By this time, I'd opened an account with my friend Hamlyn, who strongly advised my remaining on the spot to mount guard over my coffee-coloured debtors. And why not? Mary and I were as happy together as the day was long."

"And while your sons remained at school, even in England, you could have enjoyed little of their society," interposed Mrs. Hamlyn.

"The voyage home, too, was a serious matter in those days; so, having determined to stay in Indy, so long as there was any necessity for return, we dawdled on from year to year, happy in ourselves, and still happier in the thought of settling in our old age in our native country, in the bosom of our family—see the boys prosper in their turn, marry, and settle. But what a selfish old blockhead I am, to trouble you with all these details, in which you can take no manner of interest!" cried the old man, suddenly checking himself, as a warm tear, stealing down his face, rendered him painfully conscious of the presence of his companion.

"Go on, I entreat you," faltered Mrs. Hamlyn, in a tone of unfeigned interest and compassion.

"The rest, my dear good lady, you know pretty well as near as myself," resumed the colonel. "You knew my poor sons. When they were schoolboys—when Jack was at Eton, and Bob at Haileybury, they used to write us word of the happy holidays they enjoyed at Dean Park. Thanks to you and Hamlyn, the poor fellows never felt the want of a home. When they grew to man's estate, Bob, instead of accepting the fine appointment offered me for him by the Company, chose to go into the army. But Jack—poor Jack!—finding I had determined to remain in exile half a dozen years longer, resolved to come out to Indy (bless him for the thought!), to have a sight of his old father and mother. He never *did* see 'em, ma'am! The unfortunate vessel—"

"Spare yourself, my dear sir!" interrupted Mrs. Hamlyn. "The fate of poor dear John Hamilton was as deeply deplored by our fireside as by your own."

"Poor lad! poor lad! To judge by his letters, as fine a fellow as ever breathed God's air. His mother never held up her head again. She survived for years, but *never* held up her head again after the fatal news reached us. His brother—"

"His brother married—"

"Ay, but not till we'd committed the fatal mistake of freeing his heart and health out by opposition to his marriage. In that, my friend Hamlyn was a wee bit to blame. Hamlyn seemed to think that it was because I had yielded at a word to Robert's whim about the army, he now presumed on his influence to threaten me with a foolish marriage. As if parents, thousands of miles off, have any right to control the affections of an only son, grown to man's estate, and the best judge of his own tastes and inclinations! But all that might have been predicted came to pass. Though at first as positive as a Turk, I gave way the moment I heard the boy's health was failing. 'Too late, my dear madam, too late—too late!' He married (as you know, for you were present, I fancy, at the wedding), and went straight to Italy, and died within the year. If he had only left a child to comfort his parents in their old age—if he had *only* left a child! Well, ma'am, the moment the news of his sudden death reached us, we resolved to hurry home—an odd fancy, you'll think, just then, when we had nothing left to care for in England. But our only object had been to lay by a fortune for the boys. Both were gone! What or *who* was there now left in the world, to induce us to remain estranged from our native country? Mary was a confirmed invalid; but I cheered her up with hopes that native air would restore her—that there were bright days in store for us yet. Poor Mary! She smiled, and pretended to believe me, not liking to *seem* to reproach me for having occasioned the death of her son!"

"I well remember receiving the letter from Mrs. Hamilton, announcing her return," said Mrs. Hamlyn, in a low voice, "and thanking me for a lock of her son's hair. Her only desire in this world, she said, was to be laid beside him in the grave."

"Did she say *that*?" cried the old man, wiping his eyes. "Good creature! She never expressed the wish to me; feeling, I dare say, that it was fated to be ungratified! Her passage home was taken, however; and, thanks to Johnston and his wife, every comfort provided. But it wouldn't do. The word had gone forth—God had called her to himself!"

"I laid her in the grave," resumed Colonel Hamilton, in a voice broken by sobs. "My companion for thirty years—my companion, I may say, in the wilderness, with whom I had never exchanged one angry word or resentful feeling! Poor Mary! My grief for *her* was very different from what I had felt for the boys. *That* she had been there to alleviate! But everything went with *her*—everything—everything!"

Mrs. Hamlyn respected in silence the grief of the good old man. At length she ventured to congratulate him on having been able, at a crisis so grievous, to turn his back on the scene of his trials.

"Your afflictions would have been doubly painful," said she, "had circumstances compelled you to remain in India."

"I don't know—I often think otherwise," was his reply. "It seemed like losing sight of all my happier recollections, to turn my back on the place where we had abided together. The old house and gardens at Ghaznapore were full of *her*. There had our children been born to us—*there* had I wiped the last moisture from her face. My poor dear wife! The natives adored

her; she was a second Providence in the village, by her anger, or heard his voice raised by excitement. Here, no one ever heard her name. I spoke of her one day to Quibble—spoke of her as I am speaking now, and the jackass told me I was low, and advised a dose of sal-volatile! However, 'twas by her express desire I hastened home.

"You owe it to yourself and others," said poor Mrs. Hamilton, on her deathbed, "to extend your sphere of usefulness to the best of your means. We have lived, my dear husband, solely for ourselves and our children, and Heaven seems to have visited this upon us as a fault. You are rich—you possess the means of doing good. Go home. Call around you those who are left; and promote their happiness and your own. Robert's widow has claims upon you. The Hamlyns, who were parents to your children, have claims upon you. Return to England; therefore, my dear, dear Hamilton; and fulfil the excellent purposes of your kindly nature!"

"At first, compliance with her parting injunctions appeared impossible," resumed the old man, after a pause of deep emotion, "and I hoped to be spared the pain of resisting; for the first time, a wish of my wife's, by following her to the grave. But people seldom die of grief, I fancy. The Almighty proportions our trials to our strength. It is in the order of nature that we survive many whom we love, and become comforted for their loss. Providence knows best!"

"Before the end of the year I embarked for England. I have not been two years a widower, yet already I entertain hopes of making my old age, if not all that I once hoped and expected, at least happy and cheerful with the happiness and cheerfulness of others!"

"May your prospects be fully realized!" ejaculated Mrs. Hamlyn, her countenance bearing tokens of deep sympathy in the emotions of her honest-hearted friend. "You say right, Colonel Hamilton! Providence knows best. Very, very few among us are fated to be happy in the way we should have pointed out in early youth as the path of happiness; yet scarcely a human being but—"

She paused. At that moment the drawing-room door was slowly opened, and the rising colour on her cheek; and words suspended on her lips, denoted Mrs. Hamlyn's instantaneous recognition of the noiseless approach of her husband.

Colonel Hamilton, without rising from the armchair beside the fire, where he felt himself so thoroughly at home, extended his hand in cordial greeting to his friend Hamlyn, the banker.

CHAPTER II.

Lord Angelo is precise—scarcely confesses
His appetite is short to bread that stone.

SHAKESPEARE.

RICHARD HAMLYN was what is called a most excellent man—a man generally esteemed and respected—a man eminently qualified to figure to advantage on a tombstone; had never been suspected of a vice, or accused of a failing. Not a servant in his establishment, most of whom had lived with him for years, could complain of having seen his countenance disturbed

by anger, or heard his voice raised by excitement. Such, however, was the force of his calm and immutable regularity, that the most fiery domestic tyrant could not have attained a more absolute sway in his own family. His wife knew him to be averse to all display of sensibility; his children were early taught that he detested noise; and the banker's house was, consequently, characterized by the silence, coldness, and dullness of the Great Pyramid.

Impossible to see a better regulated establishment! All went as if by clockwork or steam. Whether the perfection of its household-management arose from perseverance in method or readiness of means, the result was admirable. Had any friend of Hamlyn's, after an absence of many years in the far East or far West, thought proper to drop in to dinner in Cavendish Square, or volunteer a visit to Dean Park, he might have been as certain of the hour and the minute to arrive, the number of dishes on the table and servants in attendance, the disposition of the salvers on the sideboard and decanters on the board, as though he had only vacated his seat in the dining-room the preceding day. But, on the other hand, people of Richard Hamlyn's class seldom possess a friend sufficiently friendly to drop in to dinner, or volunteer a visit in the country.

His wife, when, at eighteen, in all her bloom of beauty and cheerfulness of spirit, she accepted the proposals of a handsome young man with whom she had danced through the London season, certainly expected a very different personage in the gay son of a wealthy banker, on whom her parents were so eager to bestow her hand. But scarcely a year after their marriage, the death of the elder Hamlyn, while it assigned independence to the young couple, threw the business of the family and the firm so completely into the hands of the bridegroom as to sober him at once into a man of business.

From that moment Mrs. Hamlyn lost sight of her husband in the banker and executor; and as her mother-in-law continued till her death, some years afterward, to reside with them in Cavendish Square and at Dean Park, Richard Hamlyn had no scruple about leaving his wife alone, and devoting himself exclusively to business. In the city he thrice a week lived, and moved, and had his being. His dreams were of clerky desks, his visions of loans and Exchequer bills; and when, at the end of the week, he hurried down in summer into the country, or, at the close of the day in winter, retired to his London fireside, he arrived there so jaded in spirits by the pressure of his arduous concerns, that it was clear his idea of domestic happiness must consist in tranquillity. The greatest proof of kindness his wife could show him was to leave him silent and alone.

It is surprising how readily the tact of a woman attached to her duties suggests the surest mode of recommending herself to the affections of her husband. The merry, thoughtless Sophia soon saw that, to endear herself to the man of business, she must offer no obstruction to the methodical serenity of one who had not leisure for demonstrations of sensibility, or the frivolous pastimes of life. Punctual and acquiescent, she must receive him ever with a smile, seldom with a laugh. By degrees, the smile subsided into a thoughtful gravity still more acceptable. At thirty, Mrs. Hamlyn had sunk into a mild,

calm, silent woman, without a vestige of the buoyancy of youth; and the banker into a stiff, reserved man of business—after the fashion of most conjugal couples in the money-getting classes of Great Britain.

Had this sobriety of deportment been a matter of calculation, it could not have prospered better! Richard Hamlyn was the very mirror of bankers—the model-man of Lombard-street! His father's city contemporaries nodded their heads approvingly while remarking that Richard was a steady, exemplary young man—his wife a very prudent young woman; and though their household and modes of life were established on a footing of almost aristocratic liberality, no one was disposed to find fault. So capital was young Hamlyn's management, that even the most captious of his constituents was fain to admit that the far-sighted financier of Lombard-street and Dean Park was able to make half a sovereign go as far as a guinea.

Children, meanwhile, had been born to the prosperous couple; and the same system of discipline which had converted the gay Sophia Harrington into a domestic machine, rendered the little Hamlyns the mildest and dullest children in the world. Untaught by the example of others to be capricious or noisy (for the faults of children are far more imitative than grown-up people are apt to allow), they appeared to be as much under the control of the omnipotent banker as any other of his ciphers.

This unblinded submission on the part of those about him, exercised, by degrees, an evil influence on the character of Richard Hamlyn. In his own quiet way, he was as absolute as the sultan. He did not understand the slightest opposition to his veto; and though, having succeeded his father in the representation of the neighbouring borough of Barthorpe, his opinions commanded the respect of the House of Commons on all questions of commercial or financial interest, Hamlyn, the banker, had more than once committed himself in Parliament by outbursts of petulance singularly at variance with the gentle venour of his private life. In his country neighbourhood, on the other hand, he was respected as a just landlord and hospitable neighbour, not spending enough of his time in Warwickshire to nullify the good report of the county by the taciturn reserve of his deportment. By degrees, indeed, his temper afforded evidence in private life of the irritating stress of an anxious vocation. But Mrs. Hamlyn had either schooled herself into such apathy as to remain unconsciously of the change, or was too good a woman to avow, even to herself, that she was aware of the despotic harshness of the father of her children. The concealment was easy. Like the majority of his sex, he was never arbitrary with his wife unless when they were alone.

"What were you and Colonel Hamilton discussing to-day, that I found you both so agitated when I came in?" demanded he of his wife, as they awaited together in the drawing-room the announcement of dinner on the day in question.

"He was simply describing to me the supreme happiness of his wedded life. Mrs. Hamilton and the old gentleman appear to have been a singularly united couple."

"All couples are said to have been singularly united, as soon as either husband or wife is in the grave," replied the banker, coldly. "The Hamiltons lived very well together, or their ~~life~~ in an obscure district in India, would

have been insupportable. It was their best policy to agree!"

"People do not always act from policy," was the mild remonstrance of Mrs. Hamlyn. "Their dispositions were amiable and well assorted."

"Their means ample, and their understanding narrow!" added the banker.

"So much the better for their happiness! They seem to have entertained no injurious ambitions," observed his wife.

Hamlyn, who was standing imperially on the rug, with his back to the fire, fixed his eyes inquiringly upon her face. But the countenance of Sophia, though open, was sometimes difficult to decipher. The early habit of repressing her emotions into the equanimity of the Hamlyn temperament imparted a look of vagueness and absence to her eyes. Even while uttering a simple answer to a simple question, her thoughts often appeared to be wandering; and when silent, it was impossible to surmise from her countenance the nature of her reveries.

"Colonel Hamilton must have enlarged unconsciously on the merits of his late wife," resumed the banker, still scrutinizing the face of his companion; "for Ramsay told me, when I came in, he had been sitting with you more than an hour."

"Was it so long? Poor old man! his sole comfort consists in his visits here," replied Mrs. Hamlyn. "I wish the boys were in town, to enliven him with their society. But between Walter's hunting and Henry's Italian tour, we are left this winter quite alone!"

"What possible charm could the society of young men of their age have for an old fellow like Hamilton?"

"But since you have no leisure to bestow upon him?"

"He bestows his leisure upon you. My house is always open to him."

"Yet you seem surprised he should have been sitting here so long this morning?"

Again did Richard Hamlyn fix his eyes inquiringly on the face of his wife; but he read there no indication of an unusual bitterness of retort.

"I fear he is getting sadly weary of London," added she, with her customary gentleness. "The solitude of a crowded city, where he knows nobody, oppresses him; and Quiddle assures him that all his indigestion arises from being hyped, and recommends Brighton or Cheltenham. Colonel Hamilton is himself of opinion that London disagrees with him."

"Absurd! London is one of the most salubrious spots in the world. Portland Place lies very high, and stands upon gravel."

"His spirits, rather than his health, appear affected."

"Do you mean to say, Sophia, that London is not a sufficiently cheerful residence for a man who has been living contentedly for the last forty years, ~~the~~ with a valetudinarian wife, in a colony of Gentooes?"

"The very reason of his requiring a livelier residence in his old age. I almost agree with him," added Mrs. Hamlyn, "that he would be happier in the country."

"In short, you have been advising him to settle at Brighton or Cheltenham, where a man of his sort will be instantly surrounded by toadies, to the serious detriment of our children."

"I do not call Brighton or Cheltenham the country. The utmost I suggested was, that he

would have been happier with us this winter at Dean Park!"

"I told you before, that Hamilton has important business in Leadenhall-street."

"Which will be settled in a few months. If, therefore, instead of a house in Portland Place, he had purchased Burlington Manor—"

"You might as well say, if he had purchased the Hyde or Dean Park! Burlington Manor is not on sale!"

"Yet surely you mentioned the other night—" Mrs. Hamlyn paused. It suddenly occurred to her that her husband might not choose to be reminded of what he had mentioned the other night. But she had advanced too far to recede. The banker's curiosity was excited. She was compelled to rise and explain.

"You hinted," resumed his wife, in obedience to his commands, "that Lady Burlington had resolved against living at the Manor."

"I certainly said she was apprehensive of the large expenses such a residence must entail on the minor's estate."

"At all events, you seemed of opinion that, before long, the whole place might possibly be brought to the hammer!"

Mr. Hamlyn had indeed uttered some such denunciation; but merely in the way of menace against Lady Burlington, who occasionally saw fit to have a will of her own, as co-executrix of her husband, and guardian of her son. He now seemed struck by a sudden inspiration, and was about to utter some trivial remark by way of distracting the attention of his wife from the subject, when Ramsay, his solemn butler, entered with a mysterious air to announce dinner. It was the rule of the house to avoid, during the attendance of the servants at mealtimes, all conversation involving the mention of proper names; and nothing, consequently, could be more bald and disjointed than the dinner-table chat of the Hamlyn family.

On returning to the drawing-room after dinner, the same prohibitory regulations were in force, in deference to the presence of the young ladies and their governess, who made their appearance for tea. Few, therefore, and brief were the moments allotted to conjugal confidence by the banker, who, on points where it was his pleasure to maintain reserve, understood how to frustrate curiosity by an imperturbable coldness, more effective than the most intemperate warmth of other men.

The experience of four-and-twenty years, however, enabled his wife to form tolerably correct inferences even from his silence; and her interpretation of a few broken words and elevations of the eyebrow prevented her being much surprised, when, about a month afterward, the moment that February put forth its usual deceptive mildness, Colonel Hamilton announced one morning to Lydia and her sister that he was about to accompany their father for a day or two to Dean Park.

"Any message to your pony, Miss Lydia, my dear?" said the old man to the elder girl (towards whom he had a partial leaning, from the circumstance of his son Jack having been staying, a convalescent child from school, at Dean Park at the moment of her birth, and enlarged mightily in his letters to his mother on the beauty of the babe); "any message to the lambs and primroses on Valentine's day?"

"Going to dear Dean? How provoking! You will see the place to such advantage at this

time of year!" cried Lydia. "And I was so in hopes that at your first visit I should be there to show you—"

She paused. The warm-hearted girl hesitated about alluding to the flower-garden made for her, in her happier childhood, by her patrons, the young Hamiltons.

"Don't fret yourself, my dear young lady!" cried Colonel Hamilton. "I shall most likely see the place in all its perfection before I die; ay, and you may chance to see me there oftener than you care for. However, mum's the word! Hamlyn's such a cautious fellow that he won't let me blab even about my own affairs."

Already Mrs. Hamlyn foresaw the result of this visit. Within a week the papers were in progress whose signature was to assign Burlington Manor to the ex-colonel of Ghazera-pore.

The measure, if accomplished solely at the suggestion of the worldly-wise man in whose hands he was little more than a puppet, was one Colonel Hamilton was far less likely to repent than his own precipitate purchase in Portland Place, though even *that* evil had been remedied by the intervention of the banker, who contrived to persuade a young Irish baronet (just come into his fortune, and whom an extensive county in Ireland judged of years of sufficient discretion to represent it in Parliament), that Portland Place was an agreeable distance from the House of Commons, and six hundred a year a moderate rent.

"And so you see, my dear lady," observed Colonel Hamilton, on announcing the good news in Cavendish Square, "my friend Hamlyn's put me in the way of being comfortable: found me a house, and found me a tenant. With a degree of inconsistency I might blush for, if there were any but Fincher to admire my blushes, I've let my house to a stranger, and shall reside for the rest of my days under a stranger's roof. I'd rather have purchased—*much* rather have purchased. At my time of life, to sign a lease for twenty-one years appears like tempting Providence. But within fifty miles of Dean, not a place to be had; and the idea of going farther away from you all would have broken my old heart. So you must even make up your minds to put up with me. We're now next-door neighbours. Our park-gates stand cheek by jowl, as it were, and we might almost shake hands over the paling!"

"We used to see a great deal of the Burlington's," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, with a saddened eye. "In poor Sir Roger's lifetime, not a day passed without our meeting. As it proved impossible for Lady Burlington to keep up the place during her son's minority, I always preferred its remaining unoccupied to seeing a stranger in the room of my friend, little expecting ever to find a tenant in yourself. You are nearly the only person I could have been pleased to welcome to the haunts of my lost friends."

"Thank ye, thank ye!" cried the colonel. "There's one comfort in talking to you. One knows you mean what you say. Otherwise, I should be afraid you were already murmuring in the depths of your heart, 'Shall I *never* get rid of this old man of the sea? Is he *always* to be strapped to my shoulders?'"

"I am sure, Colonel Hamilton, you were never afraid of an unkind word or thought from mamma!" interposed Lydia, almost angrily.

"At all events, I fancy I shall have you among the grumblers," replied the old man,

turning laughingly towards her; "for my friend Hamlyn has decided that, instead of your all remaining in town till the end of the season—" He paused, as if reluctant to unfold the fate impending over them.

"What have I to do with the London season?" said Miss Hamlyn, shrugging her shoulders. "Harriet and I want only to get out of this smoky town to our ponies and flower-gardens."

"I wish ye both joy, then! for, as I was just going to tell ye, you are all to be packed off, bag and baggage, into Warwickshire, early in May."

"This is good news indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamlyn, who, taking little pleasure in the gay world previous to the introduction of her daughter into society, experienced a happy emancipation at Dean Park from the methodical restrictions imposed by the head of the family. Though the same school-hours were observed as in town, she enjoyed the company of the girls unmolested in her drives and walks, in their intervals of recreation.

"For my part, I start directly," added Colonel Hamilton. "'Tis a long time since I saw the grass grow and the trees bud in my own country. Goody Johnston and her husband swear I'm not made for a country gentleman, and try to persuade me the only thing I shall care for in my new seat is watching over the wall for the Lon'on mail to go by. But, though Hamlyn accuses me of being managed by my servants, I showed 'em I was my own master, and hurried the lawyers all the more with the papers the more they grumbled. I shall soon teach 'em how merry we can make the country by cheerful hearts and open housekeeping. And, by-the-way, my dear ma'am," continued the exulting old gentleman, addressing Mrs. Hamlyn, "as I find you're in correspondence with this Lady Burlington (who must be fretting her poor heart sadly, I should think, to be forced to give up her beautiful place), I wish you'd just tell her, as such matters don't read so well in a six-and-eight-penny letter, among the whereases and forasmuches of the lawyers, that if there's any poor folks in the village she holds to having cared for, or any favourite plants in the hot-houses she'd like to give to a friend, she has only to send me a hint, and her will's as good as done. I saw a fine Newfoundland dog skulking about the offices as though he'd been used to be petted and had lost a friend, at whom Pincher chose to set up his ears 'cause I patted him on the head."

"Poor Carlo!" murmured Lydia: "Sir Roger's old favourite! he must, indeed, miss Lady Burlington."

"Well, mind and tell her he sha'n't be tied up, but have the run of the place. Carlo shall still find himself at home."

"He was too cumbersome a fellow-traveller to take with her and the children to Naples," observed Mrs. Hamlyn. "I should have been glad to give him a home at Dean, and the mare too—Lady Burlington's favourite mare—but Mr. Hamlyn was not very kindly disposed towards her at the moment of her departure, and I did not dare propose it. I fancy Lady Burlington interfered too much with his arrangements as executor."

"That's to say, I suppose, she thought what was her son's was hers, and what was her's was her own. The two best friends that ever were born seldom remain so when there's pounds,

shillings, and pence to be settled between 'em. Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery; and there's many a brother left in the world who'd drive the same bargain. However, just mention, my dear ma'am, in your next letter, that the mare shall have a paddock to herself till her mistress finds a better master for her; and, but for Pincher's jealousy, Carlo will have his own way. I recollect what a twinge it gave my heart to leave behind at Ghazrapore a poor dromedary that worked the well in the garden, lest it should be ill-used after losing its master and mistress. I made up my mind to shoot it, but my hand failed."

Mrs. Hamlyn answered warmly for the gratitude of her absent friend; and six weeks afterward, on her arrival at Dean Park, had the satisfaction of finding her new neighbour in the exercise of all his good intentions, and the enjoyment of more than his expected pleasures. Moreover, as it was the object of the banker to render Colonel Hamilton as contented as possible in his new residence, he had issued papal indulgences to his family, in accordance with the old gentleman's wishes, entitling his daughters to accompany their mother whenever she dined at Burlington Manor; besides letters of dispensation to Miss Creswell, the governess, to visit her friends in Ireland for the remainder of the summer, her first leave of absence during ten year's tuition in the family.

"This is something like happiness, and something like home!" cried the old soldier, the first time he welcomed his Dean Park friends to his hospitable board, to meet the vicar of Ovington and his wife. "A very different thing from your ostentatious Lon'on dinner-parties, where people care for nothing but to have it said that they give better venison or more turtle, or can show off a finer service of plate than their neighbours! This is the England I used to dream of in Indy—green, and fresh, and sociable!"

"A pleasant refreshment, certainly, sir, to eyes long wearied by the parched sands and scanty foliage of the East," observed Dr. Markham, surprised at such warm enthusiasm on the part of an old gentleman of sixty-five; a bosom friend, moreover, of his saturnine patron, the banker.

"Ay, and a still greater relief, after being sent gravel-grinding, day after day, for exercise, among a parcel of gaudy hussies in Hyde Park!" retorted the colonel. "Just turn round your head, doctor, and look at the deer groped yonder under the beech-trees, and the gleams of sunshine flung through the drooping branches on the rich grass! Lydia, child! I won't have you laugh at the ecstasies of your old friend. I dare say you'll be calling me Peter Pastoral-by-and-by. You never heard the Burlingtons, maybe, run on in praise of the place, 'cause in *them* 'twould have been ostentation. But my raptures are simply an expression of gratitude to God for having secured to the old useless hulk, after the storms and breakers of life, safe anchorage in a pleasant harbour at last!"

In compliance with a wish expressed by the Hamlyn girls, the colonel ordered coffee to be served in a fine conservatory built by the late Sir Roger in the centre of the flower-garden, to which he was projecting the addition of an aviary for his Bengalees; and what a relief to the whole party was that unceremonious evening—the fragrance of the gardens enhanced by a gentle dew, and their gorgeous colours subdued by

the cheerless of a midsummer twilight—after the formalities of Dean Park!

"Is not this pleasant and sociable, Dr. Markham?" exclaimed the happy Lydia, in all the joy of schoolroom emancipation. "We never do anything of the kind at home. Papa so much dislikes having things displaced."

"Ay, ay!" interrupted the colonel, "all that sort of household subordination is a capital thing for a family-man like my friend Hamlyn. But discipline would be out of place in an establishment with an old Indian at its head, accustomed to take things as he finds 'em, too glad to find 'em at all. I like everybody to be free, easy, and comfortable about me—Pincher and all. 'Live and let live' is my motto, or, rather, 'Let live, that you may deserve to live.'"

Such sentiments received a silent "amen" from the gentle wife of the banker, and an audible one from the vicar of Orvington; who, among the numerous benefits heaped by his patron the banker on his parish, began to conceive that the greatest of all might prove the hospitable, open-hearted neighbour he had provided for the vicarage.

Dr. Markham's prejudices as a high churchman had always rendered the Roman Catholic baronets of Burlington Manor a stumbling-block in his pastoral way; and though the judicious liberality of Richard Hamlyn almost sufficed the needs of the parish, the generous Hamilton had already shown himself a more apt representative of the bounty of Providence, which sendeth its rain on the just and unjust—neither assuming with the poor the severity of a judge, nor with their pastor the pride of a rich man.

Richard Hamlyn was one of those who measure out their dole with as many conditions to the naked and hungry as though they had incurred his charity by a crime; nor could Dr. Markham disguise from himself that, after only three months' acquaintance, he was on a pleasanter footing with Colonel Hamilton than with the more correctly-spoken neighbour at Dean Park, who invariably made him feel that the parson and his wife were invited to dine now and then at the great house to "keep up the respectability of the church in the eyes of the lower classes;" or, in other words, to ensure the attendance of his servants and labourers at church, where they were frightened out of picking and stealing the property of their betters, and inspired with becoming deference for those in authority over them.

It was a real comfort, therefore, to the heart of the vicar, to find himself respected by Colonel Hamilton as a privileged expositor of the truths of the Gospel, and invited to his table as a neighbour and gentlemanly companion rather than as a professional man.

Dr. Markham was, however, too well aware of Mrs. Hamlyn's subordinate importance in the family to attribute to her any portion of the overweening purse-pride of Dean Park.

"It must be many years, madam," said he, respectfully addressing her, as they sat overlooking the flower-beds from the open door of the conservatory, "since you enjoyed the sight of your own roses in bloom? This is the first summer I remember you to have spent in Warwickshire. I often observe to Mrs. Markham, that, while the owners of the three finest seats in the neighbourhood remain pent in the stifling metropol's, she and I—a poor parson and his wife—monopolize the enjoyment of their beauties!"

"You do not, I hope, grudge my having at length come to share them with you?" inquired Mrs. Hamlyn, with a smile. "It has always consoled me for my confinement in London to know that the flowers and shrubberies at Dean were at least enjoyed by those who fill my place so kindly during my absence, in duties where it were otherwise difficult indeed to find a representative!"

Mrs. Markham, a nervous little woman, who could never be encouraged out of her village timidity by the civilities of the Manor or Dean Park, stammered something nearly unintelligible about her delight in being the dispenser of Mrs. Hamlyn's benevolence.

"But what the deuce do you mean by the three finest seats in the country, my dear doctor?" suddenly interrupted Colonel Hamilton.

"I fancy you have not yet visited the Hyde; which, begging yours and Mrs. Hamlyn's pardon, is the finest place within twenty miles round," replied the vicar.

"The Hyde—the Hyde? Never even heard of it," cried Colonel Hamilton. "I must really get a map of the county to hang up in my hall!"

"Surely you remember the fine woods I pointed out to you as Lord Vernon's, the day we drove over together from Braxham Heath!" inquired Mrs. Hamlyn.

"To be sure I do! But how was I to guess they belonged to a family-seat?"

"The Braxham woods clothe a fine acclivity. The Hyde, like most old houses, lies at the foot," said the vicar, in explanation.

"Gad! I'm glad to hear of more neighbours than I counted on!" cried the sociable old gentleman. "The more the merrier—the more the merrier—especially if I persist in my intention of spending my winters in the country. Let me see. The Manor makes up fourteen spare beds; and besides ourselves," he continued, glancing at the whole party, but addressing Mrs. Hamlyn, "there's your two sons, who I hope will be here at Christmas. Old Gratwycke of Gratwycke House tells me he is too old to sleep out of his own house. But tell me, pray, who is it lives at the Hyde?"

"I might also answer no one," replied Dr. Markham, "so little advantage does the neighbourhood derive from the society of Lord Vernon's family. His lordship's principal seat is in Northumberland; and since the present peer came to his title, he has only visited Warwickshire once or twice, avowedly to hunt with the Duke of Elvaston's hounds, whose best covers lie on this side the county."

"The Vernons associate very little with their country neighbours," added Mrs. Hamlyn, "which we regret the less, as the lord at Braxham is unpleasant enough in winter, when they are usually here, and to go round by Barsthorpe bridge doubles the distance."

The parson's wife could scarcely sufficiently admire the fluency with which Mrs. Hamlyn accounted for what the lesser thrones and dominions interpreted into the pride of all the Vernons; who presumed upon their length of pedigree towards the banker, as much as the banker presumed towards others upon his length of purse.

"In short, these fine folks are not neighbourly!" was Colonel Hamilton's summary of the case. "Well, there's room enough in the air for high-flyers and low-flyers! If they can do without us, we must do without them. I'm sur-

prised, though! We think a deal of a lord in a lady, 'cause we seldom have more than one at a time. A phoenix is a phoenix, and a governor-general's a governor-general. But I fancied that in London, where there's a whole house full of 'em, these great lords thought less of themselves."

"We scarcely know what the Vernons think of themselves, for they are almost strangers in the county," observed Mrs. Hamlyn. "They have not been here these two years."

"If there's nobody at the Hyde, then, why shouldn't I go and indulge myself with a peep at the place?" cried Colonel Hamilton.

"I think you would, perhaps, be more pleased with Ormeau," said Mrs. Hamlyn, timidly.

"But Ormeau is out of distance. One can't get from Burlington to the Duke of Elvaston's without post-horses," interposed the vicar.

"And my chief object is the drive," cried Colonel Hamilton. "The first cool day, doctor, suppose we go over in my phaeton?"

The vicar readily acquiesced. The plan suited all parties. Between the Vernons and the Hamlyns there existed a coldness which the fathers of both having been friends, might be considered enmity; and, even during the absence of the family, Mrs. Hamlyn was not fond of appearing an intruder at the Hyde. It was not a regular show-place; i. e., one of those great houses whose great lords sanction their housekeeper in exhibiting their state apartments and pictures to strangers, on the mulct of a piece of gold. But on inscribing their names in a book (kept for the purpose of recording these tributes to the family vanity), the country neighbours were privileged; and one of the pragmaticalities of Richard Hamlyn was a dislike to have his patronymic figure in the register of his haughty neighbour more than a certain number of times in the year, when forced to show off the lions of the Dean Park neighbourhood to visitors of mark and distinction. Whenever a countess was his inmate, he took care to parade her to the Hyde, uniting the name of her ladyship by a bracket with those of "Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn, of Dean Park." But his wife was sufficiently cognizant of his weaknesses to suspect that he would not wish to appear there as the bear-leader of a new-comer into the county.

Moreover, there had been of late election-feud between the banker and Lord Vernon; a member of whose family was usually the Whig representative of the county, while Hamlyn figured in Parliament as the Tory member for a neighbouring borough, in which the Vernon interest was invariably defeated.

So far from loving his neighbour as himself, Lord Vernon despised Dean Park as much as Dean Park detested Lord Vernon. According to the Christian custom of modern times, however, they hated each other in civil toleration; on that sort of visiting acquaintance which approaches nearest to the blood-stained and deadly feuds of the Middle Ages. They mutually shook hands, as if caressing a rattlesnake; while the ladies of the two families presented compliments to each other, or requested the honour of each other's company, or were each other's "very sincerely," as occasion needed.

It was a comfort, therefore, to Mr. Hamlyn, when the vicar of Orvington consented to act as cicerone to Colonel Hamilton in his visit to the stately old mansion of the Hyde.

CHAPTER III.

It stood imbosom'd in a happy valley,
Crown'd by high woodlands, where the Devil's Ark
Stood like Carthage, in act to fall.
His hosts—with broad arms 'gainst the thunder-stroke;
And from beneath the boughs were seen to rally
The dappled foresters; as day awoke,
The branching stag awoke, with all his band,
To quaff a brook that murmured like a bird.

Byron.

"By George, my dear doctor! these people have a wee bit of excuse for thinking curious old port of themselves," cried Colonel Hamilton; when, after crossing Braxham ferry, and sweeping past a quaint old Gothic lodge, his phaeton entered one of these noble English parks whose oaks are contemporaries of Queen Bess, and over whose richly swarded slopes no plough-sharp has passed in the memory of man. "Why, this fine avenue must be full two miles in length!"

"'Tis the finest in England, next to the Long Walk at Windsor," replied the vicar, attempting, as became his cloth, a quotation from Cowper in honour of avenues, which his companion pronounced to be deuced fine, and recollected perfectly in Byron.

"Is that the house?" added he, pointing to a venerable pile of Gothic almshouses, indistinctly seen from the road through openings in a grove of acorn-trees, whose heavy foliage seemed to impart additional airiness to their slight pinnacles.

"The house?" replied the vicar, smiling; "if the owner of the Hyde could only hear you! That is Vernon College, a charitable endowment of the reign of Edward VI. A large portion of the Vernon property, in this and other counties, consists of abbey lands—grants from the crown at the Reformation. It was an act of atonement, probably, on the part of Henry VIII.'s favourites, John Lord Vernon, to bestow this gift upon the poor, to repay the injuries of the Church."

"Or, rather, I suppose," remonstrated Colonel Hamilton, with an ecclesiastical interpretation, "the suppression of the monasteries, expressly endowed by pious persons for the entertainment and succour of the indigent and sick, demanded a substitution from the charity of the wealthy nobility."

"We will not inquire too curiously into the motives and conscience of John Lord Vernon," cried Dr. Markham, good-humouredly, "as I fear our sole information must be derived from his brass effigy in Braxham Church. Suffice it that, from his day to the present, the almshouses have been admirably kept up. But look! before you stands the old Manor House of the Vernons."

Having now reached nearly the end of the avenue, they were within view of a stately mansion, of Elizabethan architecture, standing in a spacious court, enclosed with palisades and gateways of enamelled iron-work. Approached from so vast a distance by a gradually declining avenue, the house, like most ancient mansions, took the traveller by surprise when its full extent of frontage was developed before him.

"And Lord Vernon, you say, has a nobler seat than even this?" exclaimed Colonel Hamilton, in the simplicity of his admiration.

"A more cheerful one, I fancy, as regards neighbourhood. Vernon Castle is at no great distance from Alnwick and Chillingham."

"And the Hyde at so great distance from

Burlington Manor and Dean Park," added the colonel. "Tis as broad as it's long."

Dr. Markham was, perhaps, of opinion that it was considerably longer than it was broad; but a spiritual pastor had no right to enlarge upon the vast distinction between lordly castles and squirearchical residences like Dean Park.

"And you say they reside here only a few weeks in the year, and that all the rest of the time this noble mansion is untenanted?" exclaimed Colonel Hamilton, when, the courtyard gates being opened by a shabby stableboy, they drove up to the venerable porch. "Doctor, doctor! with all the talk one hears against pluralities in the Church, I wonder when a law will pass 'gainst plurality of palaces in private families? There's a deal to be said, I suppose, both *pro* and *con* the subdivision of inheritance, according to Boney's Code; but, by George, if I were in Parliament, nothing should prevent my getting up and proposing an act compelling every man, having many sons and many family mansions, to bequeath 'em a country-house a piece to be happy in, and rid the country of the nuisance of vagrant younger brothers."

"The chapter is a wide one to embark in, just now particularly," added Dr. Markham, "within the gates of a man who, in addition to his English seats, has a castle in Ireland large enough to contain the village of Braxham; which, to my knowledge, he has not visited since he came to his estate."

And, ere Colonel Hamilton could express his indignation in reply, the vicar led the way into the great hall, where the old housekeeper, in her starched coif and lawn apron, awaited their approach, with her keys in her hand, and in her mouth the cut and dry exposition of the glories of the house of Vernon, a litany of the pomps and vanities of the Hyde.

All was now paraded in succession; the grand staircase—the Baron's gallery—the golden chamber—the Gobelins suite—the blue damask—the Holbein room—the cedar parlour—the chapel—the painted hall; and Colonel Hamilton's raptures increased at the exhibition of every chef d'œuvre displayed by old Mrs. Harkness, with a becoming sense of its importance and—her own.

Above all, the series of venerable family portraits, and a thousand curious relics connected with the olden time, seemed to rejoice his heart almost as much as though he had been born a Vernon. This realization of the past appeared to inspire him, for the first time, with faith in the existence of the Middle Ages.

"This is precisely the sort of thing the Yankees envy us!" cried he, after surveying the Barons' gallery with delight; "the sort of thing that secures Old England against the hubbub of a commonwealth!"

"A link in the chain of the Constitution, which, by keeping the vassal faithful, renders the noble loyal," added the doctor, in a phrase so antithetical that it sounded replete with meaning.

"I can't find it in my heart to forgive the man who owns such a place," added the colonel, enthusiastically, "for choosing to live elsewhere."

The old housekeeper smoothed down her apron, but did not smooth her ruffled brows, at hearing the Right Honourable Lord Vernon apostrophized as "a man." Though the name inscribed by her blunt visitor in the book, and Colonel Hamilton's reputation in the neighbourhood for liberality, prepared her for a nabob's

fee at parting, and to be patient under any extent of insult or injury in the interim, her wrath nearly exploded on hearing him enlarge to his reverend companion upon the dignity and interest of the Hyde, but the vast superiority of Burlington Manor.

"I should have been moped to death in a magnificent old dungeon like this!" was his ever-recurring exclamation. "This tapestry would give me the blue devils. People must have had ancestors in Harry the Eighth's time to put up with it. Why, the Manor is thrice as airy, and fifty times more convenient; to say nothing that Goody Johnstone would have died here of the ague! Hamlyn knew just what would suit me. As a country gentleman, I am far better off at the Manor."

The jerk with which old Mrs. Harkness snapped the key in the door of the state-apartments, after locking out the utterer of these insolent heresies, probably conveyed but half her contempt towards the presumptuous offender. Regarding herself as part and parcel of the illustrious family of the Vernons, Dean Park was her washpot, and over Burlington Manor did she cast her shoe.

"It is enough to keep my lord away from the place," muttered the stern housekeeper, as she dropped the colonel's sovereign scornfully into her purse, "to be troubled with the intrusion of the upstart tribe of Hamlyn the banker!"

Dr. Markham's description to his wife of the scarcely-suppressed choler of the irate old lady, served that evening to enliven the homely tea-table of the Vicarage.

"Colonel Hamilton was pleased, then, with his drive?" demanded Mrs. Markham of her husband.

"Pleased as a child. It does one's heart good to see a gray-headed man so fresh in spirit. He enjoyed all he saw and heard like a school-boy at home for the holidays."

"And what is he else?" inquired Mrs. Markham. "He tells me he went out to India at fifteen—a raw boy from the Charter House—half educated, and wholly ignorant of English habits and pleasures."

"So much the better for him! To the young men of the present day, on emerging from Haileybury, India is banishment, and banishment which their expensive habits tend to prolong. Hamilton was both frugal and contented, and now he is come home full of eagerness for the common pleasures with which other men are satisfied."

"His chief pleasure, worthy man, seems to be doing good," observed Mrs. Markham, who was bound Colonel Hamilton's slave forever by the number of yards of flannel and pairs of blankets with which he had already enriched her treasury for the Ovington poor. "Not a particle of self seems to act as a drawback upon his kindly feelings! All is sunshine in his heart; and he likes to dispense a portion of the warmth to other people. I cannot understand the friendship that unites him to so mere a man of business as—"

"Hush! my dear! It is not for us to enlarge upon the faults or failings of Dean Park," remonstrated the vicar. "Between ourselves, however, I've an idea that Hamlyn was not particularly anxious the old gentleman should visit the domain at the Hyde."

"Afraid, perhaps, of putting him out of conceit with his own?"

"Why, certainly, the good colonel's respect for our Ovington school-houses and infirmaries was a little diminished on observing the priority of such institutions at Vernon College. But to what does this amount? That the Vernons have been doing for four centuries what the Hamlyns began only forty years ago, but will, I trust, persist in for four centuries to come! Napoleon's marshal, old Lefevre, once said to a nobleman of the *ancient regime*, 'You are mighty proud of your ancestors.' Well, I am an ancestor! Some day or other, Hamlyn's descendants will be in the Upper House."

"But Dean Park will never be the Hyde of 2235!" observed the vicar's wife, shaking her head.

"I'm afraid not," rejoined her husband, laughing at her solemnity of tone. "Whatever else we do for posterity, we don't build for them. However, I should have been vexed had poor Hamlyn witnessed this morning the surprise of his Indian friend, on discovering that the acts of beneficence he had believed to originate solely in the wisdom and virtue of Dean Park—an especial invention of Richard Hamlyn, Esq., M.P.—are but a modernized edition of the old charities of the Vernons."

Little did Dr. Markham surmise, debarred as a Protestant minister from the advantages of confession over the parishioners to whom he was appointed to preach the Gospel on Sundays, the extent to which this rivalry and jealousy had influenced through life the conduct and character of Mr. Hamlyn. His disposition and destinies had been literally created by the vicinity of Dean Park to the Hyde.

The only son of a mercantile man unexpectedly enriched by one of those startling speculations which begat and extinguished millions during the early half of the last century, the elder Hamlyn had purchased the estate of the Dean, enclosed the Park, and concentrated the property, leaving to his son, the father of the present proprietor, the care of erecting a family mansion proportionate to the estate.

People never *do* build houses in proportion to their estates. Their pride will not let them, and their architects will not let them. To build a house is, as it were, to favour the public with the measure of your fortune; and either policy as a banker, or weakness as a man, inclined old Hamlyn to create an exaggerated idea of his property, by providing himself with a residence requiring a nobleman's income and establishment for its support.

The Lord Vernon of that generation was unluckily a simple, sociable man, estimating his position as much too low, as the present representative of the family rated it too high. United to Hamlyn of Dean by the bond of country neighbourhood, viz., to preserve foxes, prosecute trespassers, and blunderbuss poachers for the benefit of the community, the moment the banker began to build, the peer began to beset him with evil counsel.

"There is nothing more mistaken than to stint yourself in the proportions of your rooms, the numbering your bedrooms, or the accommodation of your offices, for the value of a trifle of brick and mortar!" said he. "A couple of thousand pounds, more or less, covers all the difference between an indifferent house and a good one."

Acting on this principle, old Hamlyn preferred building one that was excellent, and com-

pleting his establishment on the model of that of Lord Vernon; and the consequence was, that, when the new family mansion of the Hamlyns came to be discussed at justice meetings, turrupike meetings, and quarter sessions, the smaller squires of the neighbourhood ventured to predict that, on the death of the old banker and division of his property, Dean Park would prove too much for his son. Old Gratwycke, of Gratwycke House, quoted from Bacon that a house with wings oftentimes flies away with an estate; while Mr. Barlow, of Alderham, jocosely christened the banker's folly "the Lombard-street Ormeau."

These remarks did not happen to reach the ear of Richard Hamlyn till he had negatived one auspicious occasion of improving his fortunes by uniting himself with a woman who, having only ten thousand pounds, passed in the moneyed circles to which he belonged for being penniless. The insulting surmises of his country neighbours stung him to the soul; yet, on his father's death, which occurred within a year of his marriage, so far from abandoning Dean Park, or allowing the admirable charitable foundations created by his parents to decay, Richard Hamlyn, as has been already advanced, increased rather than diminished the liberality of his housekeeping; and by the admirable discipline kept up in his establishment—kitchen, stables, farm, nay, even in the family circle—was enabled to maintain his position in the county, head and front with the Vernons of the Hyde, and the Burlingtons of Burlington Manor. Nobody had any farther right to say that the old banker had over-built himself. The only change for the worse, perceptible in the household, was in the spirits of its master.

Meanwhile, as much as the present proprietor of Dean Park seemed resolved to walk in the steps of his predecessor, did the Lord Vernon, who in process of time—and a slow process it was—succeeded to the jovial old sportsman, appear determined to institute a new order of things at the Hyde. As if he had taken a spite at the old mansion where his father had survived so immoderately, he spent all his interludes of London dissipation at his castle in the North; and when he *did* visit Warwickshire (which, in the old lord's time, he had represented in Parliament), his attentions to his neighbours were paid with such punctilious regard to their graduated claims upon his notice, that one or two of the more plain-spoken country 'squires had seen fit to reject as an insult the notice measured out to them in proportion to the exact square of their acres. Old Gratwycke, of Gratwycke House, for instance, whose property consisted of a farm on which his family had been settled from the days of the Dan Cow, did not feel, in the opportunity of deciding once a year upon the merit of Lord Vernon's French cook, Italian confectioner, and German *maitre d'hôtel*, sufficient repayment for the impertinence of his lordship's wife and daughter. Unable to maintain the same terms with the son on which he had lived with the father, he chose to forget the existence of the Hyde.

Such was not the case with Richard Hamlyn. He could not at once renounce the ambition in which he had been born and nurtured, of living on a friendly footing with the Vernons. He fancied that the intimacy had given him importance with his wife's family—with his city connexions—with the county—with the world; and

whenever Lord and Lady Vernon were in Warwickshire, smarted severely under the undisguised neglects of the Hyde.

But while the London banker continued to hunger and thirst after the notice of the great people who had withdrawn the light of their countenance, the rest of the country neighbours were satisfied to enlist their sympathies in the long illness and early death of Sir Roger Burlington, and the arrival of a successor at the Manor. A thousand wild surmises went forth touching the new lessee—the strange nabob—the rich widower—who, if too old to marry again, was at least of an age to die and be succeeded in his fortune. Colonel Hamilton was a perfect treasure to the gossip of Braxham and Orvington! His couple of native servants—his bookah—his Thibet goats—his Indian curiosities of all kinds—were as great a resource to the parish as the arrival of a show of wild beasts; and when it became known that he talked of a ball for Miss Hamlyn's *debut* at Christmas, everybody was quite satisfied that Sir Roger Burlington had done wisely to vacate his family-seat, and that they were under considerable obligations to the widow for having settled in Italy.

In process of time, the feuds between the colonel's factotum, Johnston, and Sir Roger's head gardener, Anderson, whom, at Hamlyn's suggestion, he had hired with the place, occupied nearly as much attention in the vicinity of Orvington as a county election. The colonel had chosen to give his duplicate key of the gardens and pineries to Goody Johnston, and the head gardener to give warning. Opinions were divided. Some thought that a gardener who used to ensure the late Sir Roger his green peas at Christmas, his strawberries on Valentine's-day, and his peaches on April-fool's-day, was quite right not to be "put upon," but to go and seek his two hundred guineas per annum elsewhere. But the majority were decided Johnstonians, and voted that Colonel Hamilton, like the chamberlain-making kings of Germany, had a right to bestow his keys where he thought proper.

Even Mrs. Hamlyn ventured to give an opinion, when she understood that the indignant Anderson had offered his services at the Hyde.

"I am afraid you will miss him sadly in the flower-garden," said she. "From long practice, Anderson understands the Burlington forcing-houses better than any stranger can do."

"My dear good lady," cried the colonel, in reply, "I would rather all the shrubberies were rooted up, and that never another pineapple should be eaten in my house, than put up with a fellow who has offered offence to Goody Johnston! What harm would she have done in the gardens, more than my wife or daughter, if I had 'em? Let the fellow go to the Hyde, and let the Hyde go to the devil, rather than that any slight should be shown, under my roof, to the faithful attendant of the most faithful wife that ever bequeathed her memory to the respect of a husband."

On this occasion, even the banker exercised his influence in vain. Mr. Hamlyn discovered that though, in matters of business, a puppet in his hands, the old colonel, where his feelings were concerned, would display the most mulish obstinacy.

Satisfied from her letters that his wife was too high-minded or too indolent to counteract by

her personal influence that of the favourite servants of whose ascendancy over Colonel Hamilton he entertained the most mistrustful jealousy, the banker accused himself of improvidence in having placed the nabob beyond the reach of his own daily obsequiousness and serviceability. The following week, therefore, he arrived on a visit of investigation at Dean Park.

"Excuse me, my dear Hamlyn," cried his candid old friend, on seeing him, "if I own that your sallow face and careworn wrinkles put me wonderfully in conceit with my country life. Why, you're young enough to be my son; and, by George! you look old enough to be my father!"

"The late hours and trying atmosphere of the House of Commons make sad inroads into the constitution!" replied Hamlyn, with the air of the martyr.

"Come, come, come! none of your flourishes in honour of your services to the country. A banker was never known to die of patriotism," cried the colonel. "Those jaundiced looks have very little to do with zeal for the nation. 'Tis all *stop*, my dear sir—all gold-spinning—all the wear and tear of filthy lucre—all the care and anxiety of money-making—all the yellow leprosy, as I call it!"

"Say, rather, of taking care of other people's money," replied Hamlyn, attempting a smile.

"So long as you take such capital care of mine, I suppose I must find no fault," replied the Lord of Burlington Manor, jocosely. "But I feel that I'm beginning to have over you all the advantage of a country gentleman—not but that the country gentleman's estate bears its brambles as well as its blackberries. I suppose Mrs. Hamlyn, or dear Lydia, wrote you word that the people hereabouts have been playing the very deuce with me?"

This familiar and affectionate designation of his daughter grated disagreeably on the ear of the banker; and, accepting the word "people" in its lowest sense, "Mrs. Hamlyn informed me," said he, "that the fishponds at Burlington Manor had been robbed."

"Ay, so the keepers swore, who most likely dragged them themselves. But I alluded to Markham and Gratwycke, who have dragged me into the commission of the peace. The doctor chose to assert, sir, that I had hired the trouble and worry of being a magistrate in hiring Burlington Manor!"

"Very officious of Markham!" observed the banker, who disliked every measure tending to increase Colonel Hamilton's connexion with society, and chose, at all events, that the proposition should proceed from himself. It seemed to him, indeed, as if Gratwycke and the vicar, in meddling with Colonel Hamilton, had encroached upon his property.

"Had I been aware of this in time, I should have protested against your incurring so much trouble and responsibility," said he. "At your age, my dear sir, I really think—"

"Come, come, come! I've no great right to take shelter under my age," cried the colonel. "These gentlemen see that I am young enough to amuse myself by scampering over the country on a pony after my little Lydia, and are kind enough to procure me a more useful employment for my time."

"It is true there is a sad dearth of efficient men among us," replied Hamlyn, perceiving

that the colonel *chose* to be put upon. "The neighbourhood is thin. The Hyde lends us no assistance. Gratwycke is nearly superannuated."

"And not an idle man under five-and-sixty for twenty miles round!" cried Colonel Hamilton. "Poor Lydia, sad news for poor dear little Lydia! I don't know what you'll do for your Christmas ball, my dear, unless you can persuade your brother Walter to bring you down some beaux from Lon'on."

Richard Hamlyn, though his previous instructions had authorized, on the part of his family, every sacrifice likely to make the country pleasant to his valued constituent, was annoyed at the tone of familiarity which seemed to have established itself between Colonel Hamilton and his daughters. Before he returned to town, he remonstrated severely with his wife concerning the relaxation of decorum, arising from the absence of Miss Creswell.

"What will the Vernons think," said he, "when they hear of the Miss Hamlyns (after the care bestowed on their education) scampering—I use Colonel Hamilton's word—'scampering' over the country on ponies? And what chance has Walter of recommending himself to the colonel's good-will, if Lydia is constantly made his first object?"

Mrs. Hamlyn was too respectful a wife to vindicate either her girls or herself; but after her husband's return to town, she was amused to perceive how much the aid of the country had opened the eyes of the old colonel to the peculiarities of his friend.

"Hamlyn's quite right to stick to Lon'on!" said he. "Hamlyn's cut out for a man of business. Squirefying is *not* his element. He hasn't in him the true smack of the country gentleman. 'Tis all dot-and-carry-one with him, even in the middle of a turnip-field. His tenants respect him, but more by name than nature; and, notwithstanding all he has done for the poor, and the admirable management by which it has been brought about, they seem to feel themselves doubly poor in his presence. He's too prim and trim for a sportsman, too in-doorish for a farmer. Lombard-street and Cavendish Square, Parliament and city meetings, are the place for Hamlyn. There are some folks who don't seem to have been born for the open air!"

"At forty-five, it is difficult to guess what any man is born for," said Mrs. Hamlyn, with a sigh. "Grave as my husband now appears, I can assure you, that when I married, he was one of the gayest men about town—as gay as his son Walter is now."

"Walter's wild, is he? I'm glad of that! there's always hope of a wild young man! My son Jack was one of the wildest dogs ever turned out of Eton. Walter was quartered at Windsor all the time I was in Lon'on, and I'm beginning to want to make his acquaintance. Does he never come down to Dean Park?"

"When the hunting season begins."

"A curious reason for visiting his father's house! Like my friend, Sir Joshua Alltrump, who told me he attended divine service at the Chapel Royal 'cause the music was so fine."

"My son is, I admit, passionately fond of hunting," pleaded Mrs. Hamlyn.

"Well, well, 'tis something in these times for a youngster to be passionately fond of anything! To me, all the boys appear as dull and careworn as if they'd spent a life in Lombard-street; old

before they're breeched, and decrepit in their adolescence. I should never be surprised, nowadays, to hear of an Eton boy having the gout. Well! I must wait patient, I suppose, till the hounds are unkenelled, to shake hands with Master Watty."

Mrs. Hamlyn could scarcely forbear smiling at the idea of the indignation with which (had Sheet-street barracks been within earshot of Dean Park) her superfine son would have heard himself thus familiarly designated, by an individual who might have travelled from (Captain Hamlyn's) Dan to Beersheeba, *i. e.*, from St. James's-street to Whitehall, without receiving a bow of recognition from the club-windows, and whose clothes were so indefinitely cut by his nameless tailor as to have proved an equally good fit for any other man in the county.

She amended her smile, however, into a secret prayer that the time might come when Walter, now the slave of appearances, would recognise the sterling merit of a man like the simple-hearted being before her.

CHAPTER IV.

Before my gaze I see my youth,
The ghost of gentler years, arise;
With looks that yearn'd for every truth,
And wings that sought the farthest skies.

Beside that ghost of time gone by
I stand upon the waste alone,
And if a sunbeam light the sky,
It wakes no flow'rets from the stone.

The icy calm that smiles on all,
But comes from pride that veils the pain;
Alas! how much we vain would call
Content, is nothing but disdain.

E. L. BULWER.

MEANWHILE, the merits of the new resident at Burlington Manor were becoming appreciated in quarters more important than the fastidious fancy of a captain of the Household Brigade. The county gentry already congratulated themselves on the acquisition of such a coadjutor in their labours of public peace-keeping, as a man accustomed for forty years long to administrative functions, yet untried by the disappointments which are somewhat apt to sour the philanthropy, and distress the patriotism of the conscript fathers of a shire. At turnpike meetings, justice meetings, agricultural meetings, the hearty, active old man was invariably the first and last in the field.

But, above all, he was recognised by the minor guardians of the public weal as the proprietor of a capacious heart and purse, the strings of which were always open. The circumstance which had first drawn his attention in India to the firm of Hamlyn and Co., was the magnitude and consistency of their subscriptions to all public charities and institutions; little surmising, good easy man, that these donations were so many advertisements of their solidity, by speciously introducing a commercial name into the columns of the newspapers, to be wafted to the four quarters of the globe on the wings of their well-calculated beneficence. But for this blessed iteration, in fact, their name might never have reached Ghazetapore.

As innocently as he had fallen into the snare, did he now conquer, by similar means, the esteem of a county predisposed against him as an invader of the property of the ancient house of Burlington.

"Who is this man, the new tenant of poor Burlington's place?" had been eagerly inquired, when first the news transpired of the desecration of the Manor.

"I really don't know. A person who made his money in India, picked up by Hamlyn, the banker, in the course of his city connexion," was the disparaging reply. And the country gentlemen, averse to new-comers in general, and doubly averse to the idea of a rich upstart, who would crush them by his ostentation, outshine them by his equipage, and corrupt their homely households by the prodigalities of his servants' hall, entered into tacit combination against the banker's *prérogative*.

But no sooner did they find in the neighbour whom they had pictured to themselves as a peevish, enervate hypochondriac, the victim of liver and bile pill, a hale, happy-spirited old gentleman, full of child like interest in the memorabilia of the county, as well as of manly sympathy in its wants and welfare, than they extended towards him the right-hand of fellowship, wondering only how any bond of friendship could subsist between the frank, garrulous old Indian, and the calm, phlegmatic, hard-headed owner of Dean Park.

For in the county, Hamlyn was more approved than liked. His gentlemanly deportment, and handsome, orderly establishment, commanded respect; but the neighbouring squires were never sorry, during his absence, to have a fling at his political surfaceism, or the cockney niceties of his model farm.

Among the foremost ranks of these stood a gentleman of the name of Barlow, who took considerable pains to impress himself on public attention as "Barlow of Alderham," test, being chiefly known in the county as Lord Vernon's agent, it should be overlooked that he was an entity by inheritance, an esquire by qualification. That the Alderham in question was "a moated grange," standing on a farm of four hundred a year, signified nothing. The great grandsires of his great grandsire had been born under its roof, and he was, consequently entitled to talk loud at the convivial and other meetings of the neighbourhood, about "county families," "hereditary rights," and the "landed interests" of the shire. Mr. Barlow, of Alderham, seldom lowered his voice, indeed, unless when Lord Vernon, his principal, happened to be residing at the Hyde; but he was observed never to raise it so defyingly as in the presence of Richard Hamlyn, of Dean Park.

For in their various election contests, Barlow of Alderham appeared in the field as generalissimo of the Vernon faction, and being invariably defeated, it was but natural he should aim his avenging darts, on other occasions, at the vulnerable heel of the banker. In many points, he enjoyed advantages over him. He was always on the spot, constantly holding forth wherever two or three "landed-interest" apostles were gathered together, in daily scud across the country on his well-known brown cob, on Lord Vernon's business or his own; and, above all, as viceroy of the estate of the Hyde, he dispensed the squararchical patronage of its shooting, its fishing, and the private keys of the park. Those who wished to stand well with the Vernons fancied they could not begin better than by standing well with Barlow of Alderham.

All this had been fully interpreted by Hamlyn to Colonel Hamilton on his first arrival in War-

wickshire; and as the old gentleman had no disposition for toadying, and was disgusted at his very first interview by the bow-wow tone of the agent, and his perpetual allusions to "county families" and "hereditary rights," he received, with as much coldness as was compatible with his humane nature, the civil overtures of a man unfairly represented to him by the banker as the servile slave-driver of a lord. He could not dis sever Barlow (of Alderham) in his mind from the salaried tenant-screw of Lord Vernon.

Surprised at the disregard with which his civilities were treated by one whom Dr. Markham and old Graiwycke described as the most courteous and kindly of human beings, Mr. Barlow, debarred by a sense of duty towards the political interests of his patron from being resentful, was careful to issue instructions to the keepers at the Hyde that the land and water privileges enjoyed by the late Sir Roger Burlington should be conceded to his successor. A key of the private gates of the park was accordingly forwarded to the Manor, specifically inscribed with the name of Colonel Hamilton, who, ignorant of county customs, and conceiving the right of transit over Lord Vernon's property to be one of the many immunities included in his leasehold of Burlington Manor, acknowledged the courtesy by a handsome gratuity to the head-keeper, but not a word of acknowledgment to the higher powers.

Mrs. Hamlyn, who, in common with the other neighbouring families, possessed a key, but was scrupulous in using it, in deference to the uneasy position of her husband with regard to Lord Vernon at every fresh election, was startled to perceive how thoroughly the unsuspecting colonel made himself at home at the Hyde.

"In dusty weather, that beautiful pinetum is a monstrous resource to the neighbourhood," cried he. "I delight in the smell of the thyme, crushed under the wheels of my phaeton; yet, except myself (the head-keeper says, a smart, intelligent, civil fellow!), not a soul ever sets foot in it."

Sophia hesitated for a moment whether to hint to the old man, so ready to contribute to the pleasures of others, that even he might do well to abstain; that Lord Vernon was supposed to be tenacious of the privacy of his reserved walks, more especially as regarded persons connected with Dean Park. But Colonel Hamilton was not the man to be enlightened by a hint. His self-love was not of a susceptible or mistrustful kind. Aware that Dr. Markham profited by a short cut across the Hyde every time he had business at Braxham, he would have laughed at the idea of offending the *hautour* of the Vernons by frank acceptance of a favour spontaneously conceded.

Before Barlow of Alderham had thoroughly recovered his surprise at the coldness of an individual who, so far from belonging to a "county family," was unconnected with any family at all, the colonel was giving offence by new insults to his flag.

During the long illness of Sir Roger Burlington, the sporting over his estates had been placed, without reservation, at the disposal of his friend and neighbour at Dean Park, the terms of election enmity between whom and Barlow forbade any civilities towards the latter on the shooting score. But now, on the opening of the shooting season, though the colonel was said to have extended his permissions to shoot over the Manor,

to a degree horrific to the feelings of every high-principled game-preserved in the county, no opening had been made for the agent of the adjoining estate of the Hyde—an unneighbourly and monstrous exclusion.

While Barlow of Alderham was huffing over his sense of injury, tidings of Colonel Hamilton's laxity as a game-preserved proved still more appalling to Richard Hamlyn. So thoroughly did he reckon upon retaining his privileges over the Manor with a tenant who avowed his abhorrence of Neck or Manton, double-barrels or single, that he had not made the concession a clause of especial reserve in a lease dictated by himself. As a matter of course, he regarded the preserves of the isolated, friendless old man of Portland Place as his perquisite. And to find them thus desecrated—to learn that, for the future, he had only his own miserable shooting to offer to the aristocratic guests whom it was his glory, every winter, to advertise in the papers as "spending the Christmas holidays at the hospitable seat of Mr. Hamlyn, at Dean Park," was a stroke for which he was unprepared.

All he had hitherto been able to oppose to the galling slights of Lord Vernon, in a worldly sense, was the choiceness of an aristocratic circle under his roof fully rivalling that of the Hyde. As an active member of the Tory party in the House of Commons, Hamlyn possessed a certain degree of influence; while, as a banker, he had found means of obliging various of the nobility, who obliged him by their notice in return, dined with him in town, and shot with him in the country. The Ormeau hounds and the Burlington preserves had placed Dean Park among the most desirable places on which lordly placemen or dukes, debarred by distance from sporting at their Scotch or Irish seats, could quarter themselves for the holidays. And now what was to be done? How was he to invite his customary guests, or Walter to bring down to Dean his showy brother officers, without the promise of a *bathe*? Colonel Hamilton had done him irreparable injury by his inconsiderate liberality to strangers!

In his private room in Lombard-street, while apparently engaged in calculations involving the fate of millions and the welfare of his clients, the banker pondered heavily upon these things. In that gloomy, silent retreat, the den of his leisure, divided by a wainscot only from the vast counting-house, wherein twenty assiduous clerks were engaged in the active transaction of business, greasing the wheels of public traffic, and amassing grain by grain, the golden sand destined to fill the auspicious hour-glass of the Hamlyn destiny—in that silent retreat, of which, once at least in every day, some trembling petitioner crossed the threshold, referred by the chief clerk to the head of the house for the fiat which was to pronounce his bill dishonoured, or inscribe his check with "no effects"—did Richard Hamlyn, blind to the rise or fall of stocks, indifferent to the fate of Exchequer-bills, and careless of the fluctuations of the money-market, sit cursing his own oversight in having failed to secure to himself the sporting over Burlington Manor.

Though the atmosphere discernible through the skylight of that little chamber was obscured by city smoke, divided from the pure ether of heaven as by the interposing of a blanket, the baffled proprietor of Dean Park beheld, in his

mind's eye, the clear blue sky of his country-seat, and heard, in his mind's ear, the popping of hundreds of percussion-guns, engaged in shooting away his prospects in life.

Never could this reverse of fortune, as a landed proprietor, have come more inopportunistically! His jealous hatred of the Vernons, so far from mellowing and dropping from the tree, had of late acquired new aggravation. Though he had defeated the predictions of the Hyde that he would be forced to sell an estate where his father had over-built himself, Hamlyn's indignation against the family had been renewed by learning that, at a political London dinner, on being questioned concerning the honourable member for Barthorpe (his Tory opponent), Lord Vernon had spoken of him in terms the most indulgently insulting.

"Of Mr. Hamlyn, personally, I really know nothing," was his lordship's insolent reply. "We exchange cards, bows, dinners, and I believe him to be a well-intentioned person; but my agent (Barlow of Alderham) assures me that Mr. Hamlyn's petty, money-spinning system has done infinite harm in my neighbourhood. Since the introduction of Savings' Banks, Loan Societies, and premium companies of all sorts and kinds at Orvington, all the small farmers in the county fancy themselves on the road to become Rothschilds. It is amazing how mercenary and grasping the very labourers are becoming, since this notion of percentage gained ground. All their idea is money—money—money! Natural enough, perhaps, on the part of Mr. Hamlyn, to follow the bias of his calling even in his charities; for I verily believe that, were you to drop a London banker out of a caravan in the Desert, his first notion would be to establish a water-company at the nearest well! Mr. Hamlyn will, however, perhaps be the first to repent having introduced the mystery of money-making into his bewildered county."

If Hamlyn, by sacrifices the extent of which was known only to himself, had discomfited Lord Vernon's former prediction that his father's memory would be disgraced, and his estate brought to the hammer, he was now scarcely less intent upon proving that his children were likely to maintain their footing, if not exactly on the same level, exactly in the same circles as Lord Vernon's own. He had authorized his son Walter to invite, for a week's shooting at Christmas, the cornet of his troop, the young Marquis of Dartford, certain members of whose family he numbered among his constituents, and contemplated adding to the Dean Park party purporting to rival the festivities of the Hyde. But how was he to phrase his invitations to the Earl of Rotherwood, and his brother-in-law Lord Crawley, uncles of the marquis, unless enabled to make honourable mention of the preserves of Burlington Manor?

Little did poor Colonel Hamilton surmise the evils to which he had given rise by an extension of sporting liberality, which, as far as numbers were concerned, had created a popularity that might have enabled him to stand for the county. While Dean Park and the Hyde (in the person of Barlow of Alderham) complained bitterly of a weakness, exposing more rigid landed proprietors to blame, and involving the keepers of the neighbouring estates in endless affrays and squabbles, he delighted to see the neighbouring squires, and even farmers, enjoy a day's shooting on the Manor. Though thoroughly de-

spising, as became a practised hog-hunter, the puny field-sports, of Great Britain, he was not sorry to find that the note of preparation from the Ormeau kennel was about to reassemble the scattered families of the neighbourhood. The turf being now brown, and the woods bare, it was indeed time that people should return from touring and the seaside to enjoy the beauties of the country.

"More wood, Johnston! more wood!" cried the hospitable old man, one evening, when the ladies of Dean Park and their friends from the Vicarage had been driven behind screens and into recesses by the blaze of a roaring fire of roots at Burlington Manor. "Merry Christmas is coming, and let us welcome him with a bonfire! Well do I remember the bitter mornings when I used to get up by candlelight at Charter House, blowing my fingers all the time to save 'em from being frostbitten! But if we don't make a good, jolly season of it now, 'tis nobody's fault but our own!"

"You have taken care at least, sir, that the poor shall have no reason to complain," observed Mrs. Markham, gratefully.

"I seldom find that they *do* complain half so much as the rich. But this year, even the rich must not grumble! Lydia, for instance, shall have her ball, and her sledge, and her drive to covert every time the hounds meet in the neighbourhood."

"I fear Miss Creswell will interfere with some portion of these arrangements," interposed Mrs. Hamlyn, satisfied that they would incur the entire disapproval of her husband.

"Why, what the deuce! The governess coming back again, is she?" said Colonel Hamilton. "I was in hopes she was pensioned off! I'm sure there's nothing Miss Harriet wants teaching but she might learn from her sister."

"We are expecting a large Christmas party at Dean next week," she replied, not choosing to cite Mr. Hamlyn's opposition, "and I should scarcely know what to do with the girls."

"Do with 'em? Why, *let* 'em help you to entertain the large party, to be sure!" cried the colonel. "I dare say Lydia would have no objection!"

"Her father would. Lord and Lady Rotherwood, and their brother-in-law, Lord Crawley, are coming to us."

"The Home Secretary? By George! I'm glad on't! I want to badger him about having remitted the sentence of that rascal Saltash. But what exception are they likely to take to the society of an agreeable girl like Lydia?"

"As she will not be presented for some months to come, it is scarcely according to etiquette for her to join so large a party."

"And what have such folks as we are to do with etiquette at all? What signifies to any human being whether a Miss Hamlyn have or have not kissed the hand of her majesty? My dear good lady, when great lords think proper to come and sleep under your roof, depend on't, among the people they expect to meet at your table are your own sons and daughters!"

"I am happy to say that Walter *will* be with us," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, unwilling to own her perfect coincidence in his sentiments. "He is coming on the 20th, accompanied by one of his brother officers; and I trust, dear sir, that while our house is enlivened by these guests, you will join our party. The weather is too uncertain for you to return to Burlington at night."

"Faith, I should have no objection!" cried the colonel; "but, unluckily, I've asked Gratwycke's grandson to come over to me for a few days' shooting, and I suppose you've no room to take *him* in?—though Walter might like his company, may be, for I fancy he's to be a brother soldier of the captain's!"

"The idea of that silly, lanky Tom Gratwycke being a brother-anything of Walter's!" exclaimed Lydia, unable to restrain her mirth. "Dear, dear Colonel Hamilton! you little know my brother—the pink of fine gentlemen!"

"Is he? He was a deuced bad shoeblack at Eton, I know! Jack, whose fag he was, wrote me word he could make nothing of him. As to Tom Gratwycke, I am afraid the lad was a bit of a spoony. But the old gentleman's been wonderful civil in asking me a dozen times to dinner (though I'd as soon dine in the Ovington infirmary as his hot rooms), and the least I could do was to show kindness to his grandson in return. The lad *we* think nothing of is a world's wonder to *him*, the future Gratwycke of Gratwycke—his Watty—his pink of fine gentlemen!"

On the banker's arrival at Dean, a day or two previous to that of his visitors for the holidays, it was a source of considerable mortification to him that Colonel Hamilton was not of the party. He had reckoned upon his friend's company as prematurely as upon his shooting, and was greatly disappointed to find that the old gentleman was not fated to make acquaintance with his son under all the advantage (to a young man of Walter's brilliant appearance and address) of doing the honours of his father's house to a party of distinction.

Mrs. Hamlyn perceived that her husband was sovereignly displeased; that he thought *she* might have secured the company of their neighbour by an earlier invitation. Hamlyn was unusually absent and out of sorts. Christmas is an epoch equally unpropitious to the temper of men of business and their debtors; and the harness of Lombard-street cares in which the banker arrived in Warwickshire, so far from being laid aside, as he had intended, on joining his family, was buckled on anew on learning that an insignificant boy, like Tom Gratwycke, could become an obstacle to his deep-laid projects.

"The Vernons are coming down next week!" said he, fixing a stern eye upon his wife. Then, finding that she did not utter so much as an ejaculation of surprise at an announcement wholly indifferent to her, he added, "and what will they think on finding that a man of Hamilton's property could command no better resource for his Christmas circle than a vulgar hobblede-hoy like young Gratwycke?"

"I should think they would trouble themselves very little about the family arrangements of a perfect stranger!" replied Sophia, finding he insisted upon an answer.

"But *we* are not perfect strangers to them. We should have derived some consequence in their eyes from the domestication at our fireside of a man of Hamilton's enormous property; who is supposed to care for nobody but ourselves. I had flattered myself our Christmas party would be a matter of some envy at the Hyde."

"I have little doubt," observed Mrs. Hamlyn, struck by what *she* considered a brilliant inspiration, "that if you *really* had Colonel Hamilton's company at heart, it might be obtained by Lydia's intervention. If you will compromise with his whims, by allowing *her* to join the party, as

when we are alone, he might surely be persuaded to defer young Grattycke's visit till the following week?"

Mr. Hamlyn, who had been traversing the room in a fit of mental irritation, now advanced close to his wife, as if to ensure the exact hearing of her words.

"Lydia?" cried he; "*Lydia* possess sufficient influence over Hamilton to induce him to grant a request he has denied to us?"

"You are aware of his fondness for young people," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, composedly; "and his indulgence towards the girls, having ensured their affection in return, they have spent much of their time together during Miss Creswell's absence."

"It was for this, then, that you persuaded me to allow that woman leave of absence?" cried the indignant banker.

"You expressly desired we should do our utmost to render the country agreeable to Colonel Hamilton!"

"Not to the injury of Walter! I never desired to find *Lydia* his favourite. But I see how it is! Aware of my inability to make a provision for my daughters tending to their settlement in life in the brilliant position you desire, you want to bespeak the old man's fortune for them! It would not suit you to see *Lydia* become, like her mother before her, the wife of a poor, drudging man of business. No, no! you know too much of the miseries and privations of such a position. You want her to be a fine lady. You wish Colonel Hamilton's heiress to marry a nobleman. You have had enough of city men. What pride have you in my family name? The respectability of Hamlyn of Dean Park is nothing to you."

Mrs. Hamlyn raised her gentle eyes towards the angry man in utter consternation.

"But once for all, madam, know *this*!" continued he; "that sooner than Walter should not be enabled to preserve his fitting station in society, and keep up his family place in the style that his father and my father did before him, I would—"

Mr. Hamlyn paused suddenly, and his wife, breathlessly interested in these singular revelations concerning the destinies of her children, riveted her eyes on his, as if to ascertain the motive of his hesitation. His face had become suddenly blanched, and the words seemed frozen on his lips; when, lo! following the direction of his eyes towards the window, she beheld, leaning against its single pane of plate-glass, the glowing, happy countenance of Colonel Hamilton. The object of their critical conversation stood intently regarding them, having trudged in snow-shoes across the park to welcome his friend to the country.

"On with your greatcoat, and come out to me, Hamlyn!" shouted the old man. "I want to show you some draining-tiles I've had made for me at Ovington, on a plan I've often tried in Indy with success, and the fellow's waiting with 'em in the stable-yard."

Relieved by this cordial appeal from the apprehension that his incautious words might have reached the ear of Colonel Hamilton, yet so unaccustomed to be detected in a state of mental disturbance that he fancied his whole secret must be betrayed in his countenance, Richard Hamlyn stood for a moment, dreading to approach the window.

"Why not come in, my dear colonel?" said

he, having ascertained by a glance that his wife had resumed her usual air of enforced serenity.

"No, no!" was the reply. "I have conquered my first startle from the cold, and am in a fine glow. I'm not going to have my nose nipped again by a second *sortie*, after coddling myself in your hot rooms."

"I will be with you in a minute, then," said Hamlyn. "Take a turn in the shrubbery, and I will meet you at the offices."

But instead of obeying, Colonel Hamilton, after his friend's exit, chose to remain at the window, talking through it to Sophia.

"Are you very angry, my dear lady, at my carrying off your good man so soon?" cried he, so loud as to be audible not only to herself, but to the gardeners who were sweeping the snow from the gravel-walks.

"Never mind, never mind! The sledge is to be finished in a day or two (*Lydia's* sledge—I mean to call it the *Royal Lydia*), and then she and I will drive about the country together all the morning, and leave you to yourselves. I like young folks best! I'm such a frisky old boy myself, that I always want something in its teens about me, to keep my foolish old face in countenance!"

Accounted for his walk, Hamlyn now made his way along the gravel-walk towards the colonel, who, having at that moment inclined his ear close to the window to catch the faint reply of Mrs. Hamlyn, the banker had no means of surmising the subject of their conversation.

"Ready so soon? Come along with ye, then!" cried Hamilton, starting round on being tapped upon the shoulder, and little aware of the mistrustful glances which his friend was at that moment darting through the window at the confused countenance of his wife. Then seizing the arm of Hamlyn, he dragged him along at a brisk country gentleman pace, somewhat at variance with the dignified habits of the London banker.

Scarcely had they disappeared round the angle of the house, when Mrs. Hamlyn sank heavily into a chair. Claspings her hands together in utter despondency, she felt scarcely equal to confront the new sources of grief and anxiety opening in her long-imbittered existence.

Had certain of her London associates been required to point out a woman enjoying to the utmost the prosperities and contentments of life, it would have been Mrs. Hamlyn of Dean Park. With a seemingly attached and honourable husband, and promising children growing up around her, the career of such a woman was to many a matter of envy. Yet, in reality, her fate was one of those instances of personal disappointment which convert so many cheerful girls into silent and repining women.

Within a year of her happy marriage, within a year of the passionate protestations which, as usual, preceded it, Sophia Hamlyn discovered that she had sunk into nothing in the estimation of her husband. Absorbed by worldly interests, by sordid calculations, by the anxieties of a critical business suddenly devolving on his shoulders, he began to regard a wife and increasing family as domestic encumbrances—a burden upon the onerous honours of Hamlyn of Dean Park—an additional embarrassment to the house of Hamlyn and Co. Still, his deference to the decencies of society and his own high character kept him scrupulously exact to his duties as a husband and parent, and it was only the craving

eye of affection that discovered the alteration of his mood.

Luckily for all parties, Mrs. Hamlyn was a woman of principle; and just as deference to worldly opinion made Richard Hamlyn a regretful husband, the sense of duty silenced all complaints upon her lips. She felt herself to be in the enjoyment of too many of the comforts of life to murmur against Providence. She had married for better for worse; and the worse was not so much the worst that could have befallen her, as to justify rebellion against her destinies.

But Sophia was only in her first lesson of the education of the heart. By degrees, she found that, though she might content herself with a due discharge of the duties of her mission as a wife, a mother, a member of the community, it was difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile them with the exactions arising from the worldly-mindedness of her husband. She was required to sacrifice her influence over her children and enjoyment of their society to his notions of the formal propriety becoming his situation in life; to select her associates in deference to his pecuniary interests; to regulate her loves and likings according to the fluctuations of the money-market; convert life into a speculation; and, even in the holy retirement of the country, calculate her acts of benevolence so as at once to benefit the firm, and substantiate her husband's position in the county of Warwick. Having discovered all this, Sophia could no longer disguise from herself that her early marriage had perilled her happiness in this world—perhaps in the next.

To conceal the discovery from her own family and the world was her first consideration. Never, in a single instance, had she swerved in deference towards the husband of her children. If an unhappy, she was never a complaining wife.

Meanwhile she had ample consolations. The time must come when her children would afford her the companionship her heart so much needed. Their personal and moral endowments were such as to gratify, meanwhile, her utmost maternal pride; and with such prospects before her, she became fortified in her patient forbearance.

But scarcely had the period of their maturity arrived, when she was beset by new apprehensions. In the handsome Walter, the idol of his father's vanity as the future head of the firm and owner of Dean Park, she soon discerned fatal traces of the influence of the world-seeking education bestowed upon him by his father. Her affection for her warm-hearted girl, on the other hand, was frustrated by the jealousy and mistrust of Mr. Hamlyn; and she now foresaw, in the connexion of Colonel Hamilton with the family, an endless source of mistrust and dispute.

But it was a still deeper cause for apprehension that at present depressed the heart of the thoughtful mother. Aware that the man, so mild and self-controlled under the observation of society, could, if opposed, indulge in private in the most frantic irritation, she trembled at the idea that the most gifted, if not most beloved of her children, was about to incur, for the first time, the penalty of filial disobedience. Her son Henry was on the eve of drawing down upon himself the utmost violence of parental displeasure.

While his two sons were still arrayed in jackets and ranken trousers, Hamlyn, after the

fashion of most modern fathers, had decided upon their future career. Walter was to succeed him in the borough and banking-house, an eldest son in every sense of the word; Henry to go out to India, under the auspices of his maternal uncle, an India Director. But the banker, far-sighted as he was, was fated to defeat his own projects.

"You will, of course, send your eldest son to Eton? Eton is the only place for making connexions. I would not have sent Vernon to any other school than Eton for millions," sounded, on the part of the old Lord Vernon, too friendly an admonition to be disregarded; and from Eton to Oxford the transition was inevitable. The future member for Barsthorpe was accordingly entered at Christ Church; and as his prepossessing exterior and handsome allowance recommended him to what was called the first society of the University, the heir of Dean Park speedily contracted such aristocratic tastes and predilections as, on the attainment of his majority, created a demand of some thousands upon his father for his losses at hazard and on the turf. Legal claim there was none; but the harpies who prey upon the boyish vices of the University represented so clamorously that the credit of Messrs. Hamlyn, of Lombard-street, and the honour of Squire Hamlyn, of Dean Park, were inextricably involved in the issue, that the worldly-wise banker conceived it more prudent to be a silent victim.

On such trying occasions, most fathers indulge in an outburst of fury and insult that suffices to provoke farther rebellion on the part of the prodigal. Richard Hamlyn bore it like a Spartan, or, rather, like a banker; and his system of cold-blooded self-command afforded him singular advantages over the offender. Walter was touched by what he considered his father's generous forbearance; and, affected above all by his ready payment of claims which the letter of the law enabled him to dishonour, resolved to accept with respect whatever penalty might be imposed upon his fault.

Thus prepared, it was a considerable relief to his apprehensions to learn that his punishment consisted in expulsion from his father's lucrative career—an object of abhorrence to himself, and contempt to his fashionable associates.

"The irregularity of your conduct in this money transaction," observed Mr. Hamlyn to his son, in his usual mild, benevolent tone, "evinces such total deficiency of the principles I had hoped to find you—principles doubly and vitally important in a man devoted to the responsible career in which your father and grandfather have acquired the respect of the commercial world—that I dare not place the interests of my constituents in your hands. Henry, therefore, will take the place reserved for you in the firm. You must content yourself with the army."

A gleam of joy irradiated the eyes of the young Oxonian. But the visions of a guardsman's St. James's-street life, which were the origin of his self-gratulation, faded in a moment on learning that he was to be an ensign in a marching regiment; and that, in the event of his exceeding his allowance, or compromising anew his father's credit as a man of business, his bills on the firm would be dishonoured without hesitation.

To this terrible denunciation the prodigal son had the good grace to submit without a murmur.

To be gazetted into a marching regiment was mortifying enough; but, on the whole, it was less vilifying than the city. The subservience in which he had been reared by his father towards the opinions of the Hyde had brought forth such good fruit, that even at Eton Walter had been put utterly out of conceit of his prospects in life by the name of "Young Discount" bestowed upon him by his lordly companions; and, satisfied that his father had too much value for his own consequence in life to leave his son and heir exposed to the chance of being sent to Sydney or Jamaica, submitted so prudently to the sentence imposed upon him, that, twelve months afterwards, the enfranchised ensign had progressed into a corner of the Household Brigade.

Henry, meanwhile, whose fortunes were thus satisfactorily subverted, was not sorry to exchange his prospects of banishment from his family and friends for the certainty of a provision at home. Henry Hamlyn was a noble fellow. Less gifted in person than his singularly handsome brother, his mental accomplishments were of a far higher order. The darling of Mrs. Hamlyn, the idol of his sisters, as if in vindication of the unjust favouritism which rendered the heir of Dean an object of exclusive interest to his father, Henry was the only member of the family over whom his methodical routine had exercised no unfavourable influence. Guileless and fearless as a child, enthusiastic as a woman, in the days when there were no poets on the earth he would probably have become a poet. As it was—but Mrs. Hamlyn never allowed herself, even in the depths of her heart, to reflect how little he was calculated to become a banker.

On learning at Haileybury his sentence of reprieve from India, Henry had been enchanted, and received with affectionate joy the eager congratulations of his mother that they were never to lose sight of each other.

"You will see, mother," said he, exultingly, "that in time I shall make a capital banker. In the spirit of contradiction, I suppose, I have always had a great leaning towards the vocation. Such a position as my father's is not sufficiently appreciated; such a position as my father's is a most important one; requiring the exercise of the highest faculties, and a thousand virtues, beginning with that of patience. Think of the number of persons a banker has it in his power to oblige—to assist from indigence into prosperity—to reclaim, to comfort! Think of the number of important schemes he is able to forward into existence; the number of useful inventions—of—"

"My dear Henry," remonstrated his mother, "you are, as usual, too enthusiastic! Unless your views become more practical, you will make me tremble for you and for the firm."

"Don't be afraid. For some time, at least, your flighty boy's hands will be tied, and he will be unable to do mischief. Besides, with such an example ever before me as my father's prudence, my father's integrity, my father's usefulness, my father's good citizenship, it will be hard, dearest mother, if I do not progress into a model-banker, and the best man of business in the United Kingdom."

Such were the dispositions of Henry Hamlyn at nineteen. Unluckily, the harangues of the late Lord Vernon in favour of the necessity of a

college education to every young man destined to figure in Parliament, had not lost their pathos influence over the mind of his neighbour at Dean Park. To increase the connexions of the family, Cambridge was preferred to Oxford for the second son; and at Cambridge Henry speedily afforded evidence of such rare abilities as signalized his name in the University beyond all expectation.

But in proportion as his scholarship and its honours increased, his zeal for the vocation of money-making became less ardent. The slavery and abject occupations of a banking-house appalled him. With a decided taste for literature, and a passionate love of travel, how was he to reconcile the routine of a city life, or the devotion to business which he knew would be exacted by his father?

At every fresh avowal of these sentiments, Mrs. Hamlyn, to whom alone his disgusts were confided, implored him to exercise his high faculties of mind in the noblest manner, by submitting to the career appointed for him by Providence and his father. She entreated him at least to forbear from any precipitate declarations—to make the attempt; satisfied that, once embarked in his calling, the usual influence of Mr. Hamlyn's calm but potent despotism would prevail, and that he would unconsciously sink into subordination.

Unfortunately, an excursion to Italy between his Cambridge terms more than ever unsettled his mind, and Henry was now on the eve of taking his degree; resolved that if, according to general expectation, it proved a high honour, he would seize the opportunity of throwing himself on his father's indulgence, and importing redemption from a career of all others the most distasteful to his feelings.

Such was the dilemma which now wrung tears of bitterness from the gentle eyes of Mrs. Hamlyn, of Dean Park. All she had hitherto undergone was nothing to the trials she might henceforward have to bear, in the persons of her children. She had not courage to contemplate the trials of wrath about to be poured upon the head of the imprudent Henry!

Till that moment she had never allowed herself to appreciate all that was repellent in the character of her husband.

CHAPTER V.

We understand the splendid host intends

To entertain this Christmas weekend

And numerous party of his noble friends:

Midst whom we've heard, from sources quite correct,

The Duke of D. his shooting season spends.

With many more by rank and fashion decked.

Morning Post together in
BIRCH.

By a singular weakness in the character of the prudent banker, though fully conscious of the superior abilities of his second son, the member of his family of whose understanding he thought least highly was the only one who possessed the least influence over his mind, while the son who had seriously thwarted his projects was the only one who had any real ascendancy over his heart.

Walter Hamlyn, though vain and frivolous, was one of the most popular young men of the day. His good manners and personal attractions rendered him a general favourite. Mainly

as well as gentlemanly, his athletic address in the field and tennis-court recommended him at Oxford and in town to the fellowship of the most fashionable young men of the day. "Hamlyn of the Blues" was, in short, a known man; member of several of the best clubs, and moving in the highest circles of London society.

That under such circumstances he should consider himself a personage of first-rate importance was not very wonderful. Most empty-headed fellows think the same. The wonder was that the steady banker of Lombard-street should share his infatuation. For Hamlyn was proud of Walter; proud of his acceptance in society; proud of the connexions he had formed; proud of Walter's pride in his own position. In his person, the honours of Dean Park were sure to experience augmentation. Lord Vernon and his family would never presume to extend their disparagements to a fashionable young man like Hamlyn of the Blues.

That he had personally neglected the opportunity of promoting himself in life by an interested marriage, had long been a source of regret to the ambitious banker. But he felt satisfied that his future representative would effect something for the emblazonment of the family escutcheon, by connecting himself, at some future time, with the Order, the object of his jealous worship at the Hyde.

Though Richard Hamlyn kept cautious guard over himself against any betrayal of these weaknesses, the unconscionable value he affixed to his fashionable son caused him to render the epochs of Walter's visits matters of the highest moment at Dean Park. Even in Colonel Hamilton's presence he was unable to disguise this weakness; but the good old man, attributing Hamlyn's constantly recurring phrase of "We will talk of it when my son Walter arrives"—"Walter will settle what horse would be safest for the sledge"—or "Better not think of a ball till Walter has informed us how long he can stay!"—to a father's natural partiality for his firstborn, smiled aside at Lydia whenever his friend repeated the too-often reiterated name of "Walter."

"It is clear," said Colonel Hamilton, with a knowing glance, "that my young master is top-sawyer at Dean Park."

On the other hand, the banker had either enlarged considerably in his letters to Windsor on the importance of conciliating their new neighbour, or the gossip of the world had magnified fourfold the cipher of the colonel's fortune; for the fine gentleman of the Blues astonished his valet and his boots considerably by walking over with his father to the Manor within a couple of hours of his arrival at home, even before he had examined the weekly card of the appointments of the Ormeau hounds.

By the results of the visit, the banker's hopes were almost exceeded. The easy good-will of the old soldier was instantly conciliated by the easy good manners of the young one, and the spell attached to the gentlemanly demeanour of the handsome Captain Hamlyn wrought its usual miracle in his favour. His egotism was, in fact, so quiet, so free from fuss or ostentation, that it had the art of passing unnoticed. In this, the age of selfishness, there exist almost as many varieties as of dahlias or picotees; and ordinary minds being on their guard only against the loud, outspoken selfishness that appropriates the thigh of the woodcock, the wing of the

chicken, and the best place by the fire, less glaring demonstrations of the same vice, the silent egotisms of personal vanity, intellectual pride, domestic self-seclusion, sordid calculation, and divers others, glide through the world undetected, or arrayed in the mask and domino of virtue.

Colonel Hamilton was not a sufficiently nice observer to discover that Captain Hamlyn, instead of considering himself a part of his family, considered his family a portion of himself; that he looked upon the firm of Hamlyn and Co., of Lombard-street, as the mere springs and wheels of a timepiece; whereof the handsome captain in the Blues constituted the enamelled dial.

But if the designing banker triumphed in the result of his son's visit to Burlington, Walter was thoroughly disgusted. A few hurried interviews in London had not prepared him for the reckless, good-humoured familiarity of the man thus established in the bosom of his family. He was annoyed at the idea of exhibiting the unpolished eccentricities of Hamlyn to the quizzing of his young friend Lord Dartford, and his noble relatives. But, above all, he was deeply vexed to think of the impression his intimacy with this strange old man might create on the minds of the Vernons.

"We really are not sufficiently well established in the county to commit ourselves by responsibility for the oddities of a man so ignorant of the common forms of the world," was his secret reflection on quitting Burlington Hatch. "However, my father knows what he is about better than most men; and, since he decides old Hamilton's company to be an inevitable evil, I fear we must submit. A vulgar uncle or godfather, if equally rich, were supportable; for the gift of a hundred-pound note, or a charger now and then, would plead his apology. But a stranger, a man from whom one can accept nothing in return for being bored, is a charge beyond permission. I heartily wish this Christmas party were over, and the Rotherwoods relieved from the *corvée* of old Hamilton's vulgar jocularities."

To live in the world without the faculty of observation advances a man no farther in tact than to spend his days at Ghazerpore; and poor Walter, though established in the coteries of fashionable life, understood quite as little of their impulses as the simple-hearted object of his contempt. With the noble guests who, in the course of the day, assembled at Dean Park, Colonel Hamilton had the greatest success. So far from being shocked at his bluntness, the Rotherwoods were inexpressibly amused by the sallies of a person so untrammelled by the monotonizing influences of fashionable life. As something exceedingly new to them, he was exceedingly welcome; and his pungent criticisms upon the follies of the day were applauded by involuntary bursts of merriment, such as had never before echoed under the stuccoed ceilings of Dean Park.

Lord Crawley, on the other hand, a man who had set up for statesmanship on a shallow stock of reading and information, and whose knowledge consisted of facts ably abstracted from the experience of others, contrived, in the course of their first day's gossip, to extract a world of information from the colonel touching the seat of war in India, and the state of public opinion in the East. While Walter Hamlyn was endeavor-

ouring to cover, by dexterous manœuvres, the quizzicalities of the old-fashioned Nabob's method of taking wine at dinner and dealing at whist—peculiarities of no moment in the eyes of people of the world—Lord Crawley and his noble brother-in-law were chiefly anxious that the trifling young man they tolerated as their banker's son should hold his peace, that they might give their attention to the amusing anecdotes of the veteran.

Even Mrs. Hamlyn, though far superior to the weakness of blushing for a homely guest because she happened to have great personages under her roof, had been a little apprehensive that the Oriental anecdotes, so often repeated at Dean Park, might prove as tedious to her visitors as to herself.

"Afraid I shall be tired of listening to Colonel Hamilton's amusing Indian stories!" exclaimed Lady Rotherwood, to whom she expressed her apprehensions. "Are you in earnest?" Why, I never heard anything so interesting in my life! What an agreeable, chatty old man! and how much of the world he has seen!"

Mrs. Hamlyn, accustomed in her own family to hear Colonel Hamilton's oddities attributed to having seen *nothing* of "the world," could scarcely refrain from a smile. The good-natured countess's interpretation of the word was clearly that of the Statistical Society rather than of Almack's!

"It is like reading an amusing book to talk to Colonel Hamilton," persisted Lady Rotherwood; "I literally held my breath, last night, when he was giving us that charming account of the lion-hunt at Chinderabad!"

Sophia, who had been listening three times a week to this very narrative for the last six months, as one of the colonel's crack stories, and been debarred by politeness only from interrupting what she feared must form a disagreeable obstacle to the political discussions of the parliamentary men present, recognised her own misconception. It had not before struck her that the eminence of Lady Rotherwood's position in life rendered a thousand things new and strange to *her* which constituted the stale daily bread of Cavendish Square and Dean Park. Refined to inanity in her habits of life, the excitement afforded by the hair-breadth-scape inventions of a novelist, or the stirring anecdotes of a pilgrim in the wilderness, such as Colonel Hamilton, was an agreeable relief to the ennui of the languid countess.

"When my nephew joins us," she observed, on the eve of Lord Dartford's arrival. "I entreat you, my dear Mrs. Hamlyn, to get that dear old man once more into the Ghaznapore chapter. Dartford has not heard the stories of the Lion Hunt, or the Natch-girl, or the Serpent Charnier, and will be absolutely enchanted. Captain Hamlyn! *pray* promise me the Lion Hunt for your friend Dartford. My nephew is such an enthusiastic sportsman! My nephew will delight in your lively, chatty old neighbour!"

Thus encouraged, Colonel Hamilton became the star of the little party; and the enthusiasm of his auditory seemed to develop a thousand new or forgotten sources of information. Beseated by the young marquis with inquiries concerning the wild sports of the East—by Lord Crawley, touching its tribunals and institutions—by the countess regarding its climate, fruits, and flowers, its suttees and incantations—his replies were so fluent and so varied, that Walter Ham-

lyn had the mortification of finding the evening pass away without a single allusion to London politics or fashionable scandal, in which he fancied himself qualified to take a distinguished part.

Farther consideration satisfied him that, since it was his object to render his father's house agreeable to the society prized by the London banker only as conferring importance upon Dean Park in the eyes of the county, and enabling him to make a stand against the impertinence of the Vernons, they might consider themselves lucky that, while following up their system of courtesy to the nabob, they had unconsciously engaged for the amusement of their friends a first-rate conversation man!

In the sequel, the Rotherwoods were persuaded to stay a day longer than they had promised, for the sole purpose of a visit to the Oriental museum of their new friend at Burlington Manor. As to the Marquis of Dartford, he was half afraid of allowing it to be perceived how much he considered Dean Park (which on a former visit he had felt to be the acme of dulness and formality, endured only in deference to its vicinity to the Ormeau kennel) improved by the accession of a neighbour whose warmth and singleness of heart might have infused sociability into a gallery of statues.

On the morning fixed for the Rotherwoods' departure, Walter found the countess so exclusively engrossed by her pet wonder-monger that he could find no opportunity to pay her his parting compliments.

"What *can* Colonel Hamilton be bothering Lady Rotherwood about now?" he exclaimed, pettishly, to his sister Lydia, who, at the instigation of her indulgent friend, had been admitted into the party.

"Excusing himself from accompanying my father and mother, next week, to Rotherwood Castle."

"You do not mean that the Rotherwoods have invited old Hamilton?"

"Urgently. There is to be a *battue*—"

"But he is no sportsman; and I and Dartford have not heard a word of it!" interrupted Walter.

"Perhaps Lord Rotherwood may not wish to have too many sportsmen of the party."

"But what on earth would poor old Hamilton do in the midst of a circle of official men, like that assembled at Rotherwood Castle?"

"Just what I heard him answer. He said he would rather visit Lord and Lady Rotherwood when they were alone, and sociable; that he liked a snug party best!"

"What a man!" ejaculated Walter, shrugging his shoulders. "And what must Lady Rotherwood have thought of him?"

"Probably that he paid her house a great compliment! It is not often the Rotherwoods have found their company preferred to their pheasant-shooting."

"How little are such people to be depended upon!" was Captain Hamlyn's secret reflection: "The last time the Rotherwoods were here, my father was at the trouble of inviting the most amusing set in London to meet them: Flimflam, the reviewer, and Augustus Brag, the best chit-chatterer in town; yet Lady Rotherwood never came down to breakfast, and was, I suspect, bored to death! And now, to be *engouée* by this dreadful old bore! *Caprice de grande dame*, I suppose! It will be most annoying, however,

if she should not ask me to the castle for this *batue*; for I understood, and gave Dartford to understand, that I was to accompany my father."

At that moment Lady Rotherwood advanced towards Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn with her parting compliments, the travelling carriage having been announced; and Walter, overhearing cordial expressions of hospitality, felt satisfied that all was right.

He was mistaken, however, and disappointed. "I will not hear of her being left at home," were the unwelcome words that met his ear. "Colonel Hamilton has just been telling me," continued the countess, glancing kindly towards Lydia, in answer to her mother's excuses for the "unpresented" young lady, 'that she is the most charming companion in the world! that he does not know how he should get on without her!'

To refuse the pressing invitation that followed was impossible. But no sooner had the Rotherwoods departed, and Colonel Hamilton and the two young sportsmen left the room, than the wrath of Mr. Hamlyn exploded.

"Lydia invited in the place of her brother!" cried he; "a most unaccountable slight to be offered to my son, and to be offered in Colonel Hamilton's presence. But I have to thank you for it!" he continued, angrily, addressing his wife. "It is all the result of your most mistaken and pernicious system! Unable to invite the whole party, it was inevitable that Lady Rotherwood must give the preference to one whom you chose to impose upon her as a woman!"

"Indeed, dear papa, I would a thousand times rather stay at home," pleaded Lydia, tears filling her eyes at hearing, for the first time in her life, her kind mother reprehend. But Mrs. Hamlyn, dreading to see the wrath she had incurred transferred to her daughter, for the presumption of having a choice on so grave a subject, instantly dismissed the offender to her practising.

"Next year," said she, when the door had closed upon the poor girl, "Lydia will, of necessity, accompany us everywhere, and Walter experience the same chance as a supernumerary."

"Next year I shall care nothing about the matter! Next year the Rotherwoods may follow their own senseless fancies. At present, it is essential that Walter should stand on the highest ground in the estimation of Colonel Hamilton."

"Forgive me for saying that I believe Colonel Hamilton to be wholly above being influenced by the notice of great people!" mildly rejoined Mrs. Hamlyn.

"Not of great people whom he respects," retorted Hamlyn, biting his lips, which were growing paler and paler. "Do you suppose that, in the choice of an heir to his property, he would not be influenced by the worldly standing of a young man whom he knows only from report? On settling in Warwickshire, he finds us slighted—pointedly slighted—by the leading family of the neighbourhood; and it was on the courtesies of the Rotherwoods I depended, as the most effectual counterbalance to the evil. Look at the result—the result brought about by your imprudence! The Vernons are expected down to-day, and in a week's time Hamilton will have discovered us to be on distant terms of civility, more humiliating than a decided cut!" added Mr. Hamlyn, in a tone of bitterness.

"He is aware that we associate familiarly with their equals in station and respectability," urged his wife.

"Fifty Earls of Rotherwood in distant counties do not amount in value to Lord Vernon, residing almost in the same parish. Hamilton will have a right to conclude that these people know something to my discredit. Ten to one that, while keeping us at a distance, they will be extremely civil to him as a stranger in the county."

"I see no possible line of connexion between them."

"There is always a line of connexion between country neighbours whose lands adjoin: foxes to preserve, poachers to repel, trespassers to prosecute. Barlow threw out a feeler by his attention about the keys of the park. Lord Vernon expects to be lord-lieutenant of the county, and a man of Hamilton's fortune is always an object for conciliation."

"On his first arrival, you seemed anxious that his residence here should become as pleasant as possible."

"Of course, as a means of uniting him more closely with ourselves. Consider what might be the consequence, were he left to run about the country in search of amusement, making promiscuous acquaintance at watering-places! But I neither wish to see him *sled* by the Rotherwoods at Walker's expense, nor by the Vernons, in whose house he would be sure to hear us named slightly."

"By the Vernons, I am convinced his opinion would be uninfluenced," cried Mrs. Hamlyn, warmly.

"Few people are sufficiently firm to remain uninfluenced by hearing persons daily disparaged. At all events, to become intimate at the Hyde would estrange him from our fireside; where it is essential to me he should be anchored—at least till Walter's interests are secure. I shall give him vaguely to understand, however, that my son expressly avoided an invitation to Rotherwood Castle."

The wistful expression of Mrs. Hamlyn's countenance evinced her disgust at any attempt at imposition on their frank-hearted friend. But her husband might have spared his designs! At the desire of Colonel Hamilton, the two young men, in the course of their morning's shooting, had taken luncheon at the Hyde, and while pledging his cordial host in an equally cordial bumper of old Madeira, Lord Dartford's discontents had burst forth.

"And so, my dear sir," cried he to Colonel Hamilton, "this audacious aunt and uncle of mine have invited you to a *batue*, and presumed to omit Walter and myself! I feel outrageously insulted, both in my own person and my friend's. What can they mean by it? Though I *had* the luck to shoot Lord Rotherwood's favourite setter by mistake, the last time I entered his preserves, I sha'n't stand being snubbed by my own lawful uncle. Unless he make amends by an early invitation, I have serious thoughts of cutting him off with a shilling!"

"Never mind, never mind," was Colonel Hamilton's cheerful exhortation in reply. "If this weather last, you'll have little to regret in the *batue*; and if it don't, why, as you informed me, my lord, you had given up an expedition to Italy this winter solely that you might enjoy the sport of fox-hunting, you'll amuse yourself a plaguy deal better with the Ormeau hounds than in shooting the setters of the earl."

"I do prefer hunting to shooting, certainly, and I suppose my uncle will make that preference a pretext for his rudeness," cried Lord Dartford. "But there would have been no harm in giving one the option, eh, Hamlyn?" continued he, addressing Walter, who was deep in his own reflections and a chicken-pie. "For my part, I would give the best run the Duke of Devonshire is likely to have this season for the certainty of a pleasant party, such as will be assembled next week at Rotherwood Castle."

"Oh! oh!" cried Colonel Hamilton, who, like most jovial old gentlemen, was apt to suspect a pretty girl as the latent object of every good-looking young gentleman. "I'm beginning to see now what sort of bird you're wanting to take aim at at Rotherwood Castle! But if that's the case, my lord, why not be satisfied where you are? Haven't you the game in your own hands, pray, at Dean Park?"

Walter Hamlyn, shocked by the indiscretion of this allusion, yet aware that to silence the old man's reckless garrulity when once an idea had taken possession of his fancy was out of the question, attempted to change the conversation by exaggerated praise of Hodgson's pale ale at table, which was the object of his disgust. But the attention of Colonel Hamilton was not so easily diverted.

"Ay, ay! I knew Hodgson would make a convert of you in time," cried he. "Worth hogs-heads of your heavy home-brewed! The Dean Park ale sends me to sleep like one of Twaddlem's speeches. I'm expecting my new sledge over from Birmingham," continued he, turning to the marquis; "and by George, my lord, you and Miss Lydia shall have the seasoning of it. I'll send it to Dean to-morrow after breakfast; and as the park roads are famously beaten by the coats they've been leading this morning, you can't do better than refresh my old eyes with a sight of you both, by driving to Burlington to lunch. A snug drive in the snow, eh! my lord? No cross chaperon, no fussy governess, only two happy young faces glowing in the frosty air. Well! what say ye to my proposition?"

"A tempting one, certainly," replied Lord Dartford, more embarrassed than he had ever felt in his life by this indiscreet allusion, in the presence of Lydia's brother, to a preference he had scarcely yet avowed even to himself. "The only obstacle is the improbability of Miss Hamlyn's accepting it, and the impossibility of my even venturing to name it at Dean Park."

"Pho, pho, pho! What is there to prevent two young people from enjoying a harmless diversion, pray, who have a mind to each other's company? A hundred miles, too, from the prying and scandal-mongering of London? Where's the harm of a drive, I should like to know?"

"None, I hope, my dear sir!" cried Lord Dartford, rising from table, and snatching up his shooting-cap to depart. "For which reason, I trust you will not forget your kind offer of the sledge, that I may make an attempt to enjoy one with Mrs. Hamlyn, if she will do me honour of trusting my sledgemanship. Priority of age, you know! Mrs. Hamlyn and I first, her son and daughter next. I have a year and two months the advantage over Walter there, and claim precedence with the new toy. Come, Hamlyn, we shall have just time for the coveys we marked down in the turnips as we go home."

On their way back to Dean Park, Walter Hamlyn made divers attempts at apology for

the eccentricities of their host. But Dartford discouraged all by pronouncing him, in round terms, to be "a capital old fellow."

"What an acquisition you must find him in your thin neighbourhood!" exclaimed the marquis. "When I heard from Copington that you were to have the Vernons here this winter, I really pined you! Lady Vernon and her daughter are the two most restless, plotting women of my acquaintance! Lord Vernon is a pompous cipher, an 'in-the-name of the prophet, Fies' sort of fellow; and Alferic, a Frenchified prig! I could not stand such neighbours as the Vernons. But this pleasant, open-hearted old soldier is really a resource."

Walter Hamlyn, the ambition of whose life it was to become the bosom friend of the Frenchified prig—the favoured admirer of the restless, plotting girl—replied evasively that, as the Vernons lived chiefly in Northumberland, and there were election feuds between the families, their comings or goings were a matter of no moment to Dean Park.

So thoroughly disingenuous, however, was this statement, that at that very moment the banker was engaged in deliberating on the day and the hour when, without positive compromise of his dignity, it became him to leave a card of courtesy on his arrival upon the unconciliating peer with whom he was forced to keep up the semblance of neighbourship, tidings having already reached him that the family coach of the Vernons had been seen making its dogged way along the Ovington road, bringing the august family to spend a discontented winter at the Hyde.

Though the severe definition hazarded by the young marquis of Lord Vernon was somewhat exaggerated, it would have been difficult to point out a man less happy in himself, or less disposed to administer to the happiness of others. A victim to the moral dyspepsy arising from the repletion of prosperity, the great man murmured away his useless life, ringing the golden bells of his gorgeous rattle with as doleful a measure as though they were solemnizing a funeral.

The sullen discontent of his lordship did not rise, indeed, to the dignity of misanthropy, or pretend to base itself on consciousness of personal superiority. But whereas his father, the late noble lord, had enjoyed estates to the value of thirty thousand a year, he thought himself a much injured man to succeed to two thirds only of that amount, in consequence of the absorptions of a long dowagerhood, and superabounding family of brothers and sisters. But had Lord Vernon been quite candid with himself, which few people are in this world, he would have admitted that his chief quarrel against destiny consisted in the good old age to which his father had survived.

"I did not come into my property," was one of his favourite complaints, "till I was past the age for enjoying it." To which he did not think it necessary to add that, when at length made a happy man by the death of his octogenarian parent, he had considerably encumbered an already diminished rent-roll by the amount of his post-obits.

Concerning the only real calamity of his life he was equally silent: the fact, namely, that soon after attaining his majority he had become a dupe to the designs of a fashionable match-hunter, who, having falsely estimated the eldest

son of a peer having already numbered three-score years as an excellent *parti*, resented it almost as a crime against herself and her children when, a few years afterward, the old lord saw fit to discountenance her appraisements by a second marriage, followed by a numerous progeny. This worldly-minded wife had exercised, through life, considerable influence over the shallow mind of her husband; and, compelled to pass the first twenty years of their married life in modest competence, in lieu of the brilliant existence they had mutually projected, Lord Vernon, when at length his venerable parent obliged him by dropping into the grave, had lost the power of enjoying with due zest the death of his father. Such, at least, was the plain English interpretation of his murmurs. Indignant as he would have been had any one now suggested that his survival might become an obstacle to the pleasures of his children, certain it is that his father's length of days had been a burden to him. Let Christian moralists determine whether such sentiments on the part of an enlightened man be not more culpable in the sight of God than the outrages of physical violence so heavily visited in lower life by the retributive justice of the law.

Until, at the age of forty-five, Lord Vernon accomplished the long-coveted enjoyment of what he called independence—namely, a house in town, three country-seats, and a suitable establishment—his poverty seemed to afford sufficient subject for his grumblings. His "wretched allowance" (of three thousand a year), scarcely enabling him to enjoy his hunting in Leicestershire, maintain his son at college, and bestow upon his pretty affected daughter her due excess of the superficial accomplishments of the day, placed him, in his own estimation, in indigent circumstances. But on the attainment of twenty thousand per annum, albeit the annual amount of seven thousand had been abstracted for evermore from the family rent-roll by the weakness of the old lord in favour of his junior branches, it seemed almost time he should find some more legitimate cause for discontent than pecuniary distress.

A new evil opportunely presented itself. Government began to use Lord Vernon almost as ill by its precariousness as his father had done by his longevity. The administration to which, for many years past, he had pawned his vote in Parliament, on the private understanding of receiving an earldom, in redemption, on the death of his father, thought proper to resign a few months previous to that long-procrastinated event—with malice prepense, of course. Ministers *could* have no stronger incentive for their resignation of office than to baffle the ambition of a newly-inheriting peer.

Conscious that he had forborne to press his father's advancement to the earldom, solely under an apprehension that the old man might be tempted to increase the portions of his eight daughters when promoted into ladyships, Lord Vernon felt too angry with himself for having allowed the long-coveted object to slip through his fingers, not to contemplate the addition to his family honours with increased and increasing avidity. The gloomy turn of countenance acquired by brooding over his domestic calamities during the lifetime of the late lord became, accordingly, more morose than ever; till the world, unaware of his secret sources of dissatisfaction, began to attribute to pride his lord-

ship's ill-humoured reserve. The surliness of a great man who has no justifying or ostensible cause for being out of sorts is usually so attributed.

Nevertheless, the individual supposed by his country neighbours to wear so sour a visage simply because qualified by the peerage as "John, fourteenth Lord Vernon," stood in reality so low in his own conceit, that he thought himself nothing because unable to accomplish the coveted object of writing himself down John, the first earl. He clearly felt that he should have lived in vain unless he achieved a step of precedence over his predecessor.

The very motive of his lordship's preference of Vernon Castle as a residence over the Hyde was of similar instigation. So far from caring about the sociability of the neighbourhood, or despising the Warwickshire squirearchy, he took less pleasure in his ancient seat only because overshadowed in the county by the superior distinctions of his noble neighbours at Ormeau. The Duke of Elvaston was a greater personage than himself, and a more popular person. Having succeeded to his family honours at an early age, his grace's connexion with the neighbourhood was an affair of forty years long; and he had, consequently, obliged twenty times as many people as Lord Vernon, and given away ninety-and-nine times as many haunches of venison to the rich, and chaldrons of coals to the poor. Moreover, the duke had one of the best seats in England, and was master of a crack pack of fox-hounds; and Lord Vernon, even had he been a worthier and better-tempered man, might have vainly attempted to contend against these truly great British elements of popularity.

Next to the superior greatness of Ormeau, Lord Vernon was jealous of the officious activity of Dean Park. In his rare visits to the Hyde during the lifetime of his father, he had always felt annoyed at meeting among the guests a man, a banker, who presumed to differ in politics from the noble house of Vernon; a house already moss-grown with antiquity at a time when that of Dean Park was still an unenclosed common; and now that he bore in his own person the dignities of the peerage, he intended, by his chilling reserve, to replace the individual who exercised such unjustifiable influence in that part of the county, in the obscurity he considered to be Richard Hamlyn's appropriate element. The Duke of Elvaston was, in short, the upas over his head, and Hamlyn the fungus at his feet.

The offspring of Lord and Lady Vernon partook of the nature of their parents, and were of the world, worldly. To form a desirable matrimonial connexion was the object of the one, to avoid a disadvantageous one the object of the other. From the day Lucinda Vernon was presented, it had been the absorbing ambition of the *débutante* and her mother to hail her as a marchioness; and the son of the Duke of Elvaston happening to be married, they mutually shared Lord Vernon's antipathy to a neighbourhood presenting no facilities for the realization of their favourite project.

Under such circumstances, the beautiful seat of the Hyde might, perhaps, have been altogether deserted by its ungrateful proprietor but for the influence of the son and heir over the mind of his mother. Alberic Vernon, by dexterous allusions to the improvidence of an ab-

senteism that might have the effect of excluding his father from the lord-lieutenancy, which he represented as a step towards the earldom, continued to bring his parents, during the hunting season, within reach of the advantages of Ormeau.

That the environs of the Hyde contained *more* than the Ormeau fox-hounds, not one of the party cared to remember. The indigenous families were no more in their estimation than the oaks or beeches of the neighbourhood—its cauliflowers or spinach; people with whom they had no interest in common—no possible connexion. With the exception of the Hamlyns of Dean Park, none of them were even specific enough to be hateful.

Whenever questioned in Northumberland or town touching their Warwickshire neighbours, Lady Vernon or Lucinda would reply, "We have no one with whom we can associate, being out of visiting distance from Ormeau;" while Alberic was often heard to boast that the sole advantage of the Hyde was its utter isolation.

"No booby squires thereabouts, thank Heaven, to ride over the hounds, or try to hook one for their daughters. We have it all our own way at the Hyde."

Though Lady Vernon and her daughter had a slight ballroom acquaintance with Walter Hamlyn, there seemed so little affinity between the fashionable captain of the Blues, and the insignificant family at Dean Park that they had actually never been at the trouble of connecting him in their mind with their offending Warwickshire opponents.

The Vernons were now visiting the halls of their ancestors with renewed disgust. Her ladyship and her daughter had been vainly attempting to persuade Lord Vernon into passing the winter in Italy, in order to follow up at Rome what they fancied to be one of the promising match-hunts of the London season; while his lordship, frustrated in his hopes that a change of ministry was about to renew his prospects of promotion, felt more than usually aggrieved by the limited number of balls in his coronet. At such a moment, it required all the selfish perseverance of young Vernon to determine his father to come and be shone upon by the superior resplendence of Ormeau.

"My dear Inda, we must make some sacrifices to your brother!" was Lady Vernon's reply to the peevish remonstrances of the repining young lady. "Alberic cannot, of course, dispense with his hunting—it is the chief business of life to a young man of his age; and were your father to enable him to set up an independent establishment at the Hyde, we should be having him marry, or do some silly thing or other. No great sacrifice for us to spend six weeks there! Indeed, as we always get ill with the damp or dullness of the place, it will afford an excellent excuse for taking a house at Brighton, for Easter, to recruit our health."

"I suppose, then, we must make the best of it," sighed Miss Vernon, shrugging her shoulders. "One comfort is that there is no visiting, no going out, no call upon one's attention. So, with plenty of new novels from Ebers's, and a new piece of braidwork from Brydon's, I trust I may be able to get through my period of penance."

Before the expiration of a couple of days, the young lady began to assert this with less certainty of survival. Never had the Hyde ap-

peared so insupportable. The weather was against them. A deep snow confined the Ormeau hounds to their kennel, and Lord Vernon and his son to their fireside; and Lucinda had all the *ennui* of her brother to support, in addition to her own. Lady Vernon, too, still smarting under her disappointments of the season in the non-marriage of her daughter, was forced to listen, hour after hour, to the ejaculations of the listless, useless, graceless husband, who protested that, from the moment he was born, he had been a football for the fates, and thwarted in all his objects of existence.

"It only required for me to determine to spend a few weeks at the Hyde to bring such a winter as this!" grumbled Lord Vernon, as he stood roasting himself before the breakfast-room fire. "But 'tis the last time I ever risk the annoyance. It is too absurd to be making the sacrifice of one's time and health in this detestable house, on pretence of giving Alberic his hunting, when the hounds will probably not be out of their kennel half a dozen times in as many weeks."

"My father always labours to impress upon me the vast self-sacrifice of his visit here," was the comment on this text, after Lord Vernon had left the room, of one who had been taught by his own parents the lesson of unfiliality. "But, after all, what but his own stinginess brings us to the Hyde? Were he to make a proper addition to my allowance, nothing would be more agreeable to me than to spend the winter at Melton. The Ormeau hounds are a very fair pack, the Ormeau county, is tolerable; but as Dartford was saying yesterday, the idea of comparing them with Melton is—"

"Dartford?" interrupted Lady Vernon, to whom, though apparently engaged in perusal of the Morning Post, her son's observations were addressed.

"He was saying to me yesterday, I observed," resumed her son, "that it—"

"Lord Dartford was saying to you yesterday?" again remorselessly interrupted her ladyship. "Why, where on earth did you see him?"

"At Ovington."

"Changing horses, of course! but I fancied he was half way to Italy by this time."

"He could not get leave, I fancy, for the scheme fell to the ground. He has been staying in this neighbourhood."

"At Ormeau, I conclude. How unreasonable it is, Alberic, that your father should persist in being on such unsociable terms with those people! It is all very well to give out in the neighbourhood we come here for retirement—do not wish to go out on account of your father's gout, and so forth; for there is not a soul within reach with whom we have the least object in associating. But there might surely be found some plea of exception for the Elvastons."

"I'm sure I don't know *why*. The Warwickshire people are unexceptionably odious, and the Ormeau set worst of all. As far as sporting goes, the duke is a valuable man, but his family bores are of the first magnitude. Those dreadful Irish nieces of the duchess, who are quartered at the Castle regularly every hunting season, in hopes that some unhappy fellow may be netted during a long frost, or when laid up with a broken collar-bone. No, no, my father is quite right to relieve us from the hospitalities of Ormeau."

"You never consider for a moment the in-

interests of your sister," cried Lady Vernon, pettishly.

"What advantage could Linda possibly derive at Ormeau? Cossington is married, poor fellow! and all the young men in the house are marked with a white cross, to be cut down for the Irish nieces."

"You very well know, however, what attention he paid to Linda last season."

"Who, Cossington?"

"What nonsense! I am talking of Lord Dartford."

"But what has Dartford to do with the Elvasons, mother?"

"You said you spoke to him yesterday, on his road from Ormeau."

"Indeed I said no such thing."

"What did you say, then?"

"That he advised me strongly to join him in February, at Melton."

"But where has he been staying, then, in Warwickshire?"

"At Hamlyn the banker's."

"How very strange! He can't be in difficulties already! What takes him to a banker's, I wonder?"

"The son is in the Blues, you know. Dartford is in Hamlyn's troop."

"That good-looking Captain Hamlyn we met at dinner at Elvaston House?"

"Precisely."

"Why did you never tell me so before? We ought to return those Dean Park people's visit. The grandfather was a great friend of the late Lord Vernon."

"Grandfather! I thought they were people of yesterday."

"And so they are; but Lord Vernon was what is called a good neighbour, that is, caring not a straw with whom he associated, so that he was sure of society. But I really believe these Hamlyns are inoffensive, good sort of people. How long was Lord Dartford there?"

"I did not ask him. Some days, I believe."

"How very provoking!"

"Why provoking?"

"Because we have been sitting over the fire for the last two mornings, wearying our hearts and souls out for want of something to do, and might just as well have driven over to Dean Park."

"In such weather?"

"What signifies weather when one has an object in view?"

"It signifies very much to the horses. And what object can you possibly have in driving, in a deep snow, to call upon a vulgar banker's vulgar wife?"

"To invite Lord Dartford here, to be sure."

"Take out your horses and servants in such weather to accomplish what a note by the post would have settled equally well."

"I beg your pardon. I should have had no objection to ask him to the Hyde in an offhand sort of way, but, on the terms we are, I do not choose to write him a formal letter of invitation. You know yourself, Alberic, what remarks you always make when asked to a country-house where there are unmarried daughters."

"That is, what remarks you make, mother, which I am forced to echo. However, if you really wish to invite Dartford in what you call an offhand sort of way (of all *impromptus fait à loisir* the most treacherous—a positive *guet-à-pens*!), you have lost time. I met him yesterday

at Ovington, not, as you surmised, changing horses; he was simply shopping for the people at Dean Park, buying a skein of white worsted, or some nonsense of that description. He is not off these three days."

"What can possibly keep him loitering on in such a house as that? Mrs. Hamlyn is a dull, motherly sort of woman; the daughters are not grown up. My dear Alberic, if you are going to the stables, say the carriage will be wanted after luncheon to drive over to Dean."

Mr. Vernon rang the bell, and reiterated the order to the groom of the chambers.

"I have too much regard for old Robson to make his wig stand on end by any such outrageous instructions," said he; and, on pretence of letters to write, he proceeded to shut himself up in his own room, to enjoy the morning, in an easy-chair before the fire, with his dog at his feet, a cigar in his mouth, and in his hand the last new novel of Eugene Sue.

Meanwhile, furred to the chin, and with their feet ensconced in well-warmed *Chancelières*, his mother and sister set forth upon their arctic expedition; a visit which, the preceding day, would have been pronounced as unaccomplishable as one of the labours of Hercules, having suddenly become a trifle light as air when connected with the castles in the air dependant upon the capture of a marquis.

CHAPTER VI.

If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows that he is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent joined to them. If he easily pardon and remit offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries.
—BACON.

LITTLE aware of the motive of Lady Vernon's unusual condescension, Mrs. Hamlyn received her guests with a quiet courtesy that not even her husband's ardent desire to conciliate the family at the Hyde had ever availed to render servile. She was very sincere, however, in her expressions of regret that her ladyship should have attempted so long a drive in weather so severe, for the mere ceremony of a morning visit.

"I had business at Ovington, and a mile or two, more or less, makes no great difference," was the ill-bred explanation of the manoeuvring lady, afraid that her latent object might be suspected, and scarcely knowing how to introduce the name of Lord Dartford, so as to ascertain whether her son's information were correct; for already she perceived herself mistaken in the supposition that the banker's wife would be unable to refrain from some allusion to so desirable a guest within the first ten minutes of their interview.

Mrs. Hamlyn's polite expressions of satisfaction at the return of the Vernon family to the Hyde were met with an equally ill grace.

"We scarcely hoped to have the pleasure of seeing your ladyship in Warwickshire this winter," observed the hostess. "The newspapers had announced that you were on the point of starting for Italy."

"Oh! pray do not mention it—the disappointment was too trying!" interrupted Miss Vernon, with an affected sigh. "After anticipating the delights of that charming climate, a winter in Warwickshire seems doubly insupportable. I do believe it always snows at the Hyde. Every

Christmas we have spent there, at least, the snow has been a foot deep on the ground."

And both mother and daughter fell upon their family place as ferociously as though poor Mrs. Hamlyn were accountable for all the crimes and misdemeanors of the county!

"For my part, I suffered so severely from rheumatism the last winter I spent at the Hyde," resumed Lady Vernon, languidly, "that I had fully made up my mind never again to set foot in the house, unless in summer, as a resting-place on our way to the North."

"The house is certainly better adapted for a summer residence," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, scarcely considering it civil to be too severe upon the family-seat of her visiter.

"Better adapted? Say rather more *bearable*!" retorted Miss Vernon, with a shudder. "I know nothing for which the Hyde is adapted, unless to figure in one of Charlotte Smith's equally old-fashioned novels. I found one yesterday in the library, describing the place as though the Hyde had sat for its picture!"

"It would, however, have been cruel upon my son to leave him alone there, his first winter in England," added Lady Vernon. "Alberic is passionately fond of hunting; and in these days everything is sacrificed to young people, and by young people to their pleasures. I dare say you have the mortification to find that Dean Park owes a considerable portion of its attraction, in the eyes of Captain Hamlyn, to its vicinity to Ormeau?"

This was the longest and civillest speech Mrs. Hamlyn had ever yet heard from the lips of Lady Vernon, who had not deigned to notice, on previous occasions, her relationship to Walter.

"My son is certainly fond of hunting," was Sophia's meek reply. "But later in the season he usually enjoys a few weeks at Melton."

"He is with you at present, however, I believe?" resumed Lady Vernon, fancying she was veering round unperceived towards the marquis.

"He will be here, I hope, till next week."

"In that case, pray tell him he must lose no time in riding over to see us at the Hyde," was the gracious rejoinder of the great lady. "Alberic and Captain Hamlyn were schoolfellows. But there is some difference of age between them; and my son has been so little in England, that he has had no opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of young men of his own standing: a circumstance I regret more especially in the case of those connected with him by the common ties of interest in the county. Perhaps Captain Hamlyn will come over to-morrow without ceremony, and dine and sleep at the Hyde? I am expecting my sister, Lady Middlebury, and her family."

"My son would doubtless have had much pleasure in accepting your ladyship's invitation," replied the astonished Mrs. Hamlyn, "but—"

Terrified by the sound of a disjunctive conjunction so sinister to her hopes, Lady Vernon, interrupting her hostess, recommenced her attack.

"Lord Vernon would have done himself the honour of calling on Mr. Hamlyn, or accompanying me here to-day," said she, "but he has, unfortunately, flying symptoms of gout, which confine him to the house. The last time he was at the Hyde he experienced a very severe attack."

"My son would, I am sure, have had great

pleasure in waiting upon his lordship without any preliminary of the kind," resumed Mrs. Hamlyn, unable to account for this excess of courtesy, "but at present we have a friend staying with us in the house."

"In that case, it will only give us additional pleasure if he will consent to accompany Captain Hamlyn," added Lady Vernon. "But I fear I must now ask leave to ring for my carriage," said she, with sudden recollection; "my coachman made it an earnest request, in behalf of his horses, that he might not have to put up in your warm stable for so short a time, and I do not like to keep him out, poor old man, in this bitter cold."

"There is always so much more fuss about horses taking cold than human beings!" observed Miss Vernon, aside to Lydia (with whom she had been exchanging a few insignificant sentences, in hopes to avoid overhearing the nervous mention of Lord Dartford's name); while the simple-hearted girl, in her plain morning-dress, sat contemplating with admiration the number of ways and means by which fur could be rendered ornamental to the human form divine, as exemplified in the fanciful winter-dress of the London belle.

"You will, I hope, have the goodness to express all this to Captain Hamlyn and his friend," added Lady Vernon, a guilty conscience rendering the name of the marquis unpronounceable. "We dine at seven—a *liberal* seven. But it will be perhaps better if I write the hour on the two cards I was about to leave in the hall, on the part of Lord Vernon."

"I can only promise to *deliver* them," observed Mrs. Hamlyn, while her guest, who had risen to take leave, hastily inscribed in pencil on the visiting-cards the date of the invitation. "The gentlemen must, of course, answer for themselves."

"Since you have kindly consented to part with them, I consider the engagement accepted," said Lady Vernon, a tall, square-shouldered, law-laying-down woman, to whom, when she chose to carry a point, it seemed difficult to persist in opposition. "One really has scruples about sending men and horses across the country with superfluous notes at such a season! Unless, therefore, I hear to the contrary, we shall expect the honour of seeing Captain Hamlyn and his friend to-morrow, to dine and sleep at the Hyde."

With a shake of the hand fully qualified to frostbite the fingers of Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughter, the Vernons now took leave.

"What extremely disagreeable people! And what *could* bring them out to call upon us in such weather!" exclaimed Lydia, the moment the carriage drove from the door, this being Miss Hamlyn's first interview with the family.

"It is not always easy to dive into the motives of so worldly a woman as Lady Vernon!" was her mother's reply. "That she *had* some unavowed motive, I fear I must conclude, for she is not a person who acts upon ordinary impulses of good nature. Lord Vernon may wish to conciliate your father concerning some election difficulty, or there is some private bill, perhaps, he wants to carry through the House. I know they are talking of enclosing Alderham Gorse."

"In that case, surely papa would have been included in the invitation. It seems almost rude that Lady Vernon should pointedly omit him, yet invite others out of his house!"

"Had your father been invited, we must all have been included in the party, and with the present family at the Hyde we are only on terms of rare and formal dinner-parties. We have never been offered beds. With Walter they may relax from these formalities. They meet *him* everywhere in town—he was at Eton with young Vernon. They will probably establish a footing of intimacy with your brother."

"I only trust Walter will have the spirit to refuse! Become intimate with people who have kept systematically aloof from his parents!"

"When you have seen more of the world, Lydia, you will find that those who devote themselves exclusively to high society (as Walter seems inclined to do), do not analyze too curiously the motives of their associates. Walter must take the Vernons' civilities as he finds them, or he will not find them at all."

"But why not learn to dispense with them? Surely there is nothing *very* charming in the family?"

"Miss Vernon and her brother are the only young people in the neighbourhood. When Mr. Vernon marries, his father will perhaps establish him at the Hyde. It is certainly desirable that your brother, as the future owner of Dean, should be on amicable terms with so near a neighbour."

"From something Lord Dartford said yesterday, I should think Mr. Vernon never *would* marry!" observed Lydia. "He fancies, it seems, that every young lady he sees has designs upon him, and is constantly refusing invitations, and running away from country-houses, on pretence that some family or other is trying to entrap him into a match!"

"Did Lord Dartford tell you all this?" inquired Mrs. Hamlyn, with a heightened colour, vexed at the idea that a tone of such familiar pleasantry should have established itself, without her knowledge, between the young marquis and her daughter.

"No, mamma! He told *me* nothing. While he was here, nothing passed between us you did not hear. But yesterday, the billiard-room door being open while I sat reading in the library, I heard Lord Dartford mention to my brother that he had met Mr. Vernon at Ovington (when he rode over to inquire for letters), and had almost persuaded him to take Dean Park on his way home to the Hyde."

"I am very glad he did *not*!" ejaculated Mrs. Hamlyn.

"Walter, however, seemed vexed that Mr. Vernon had not accepted the proposal, and spoke of inviting him to dine and sleep here the first time the hounds met in the neighbourhood. 'He won't *come*!' observed Lord Dartford, continuing his game. 'Why not?' rejoined my brother. 'Because Alberic never shows his nose in a country-house where there is an unmarried daughter.' Walter laughed at the idea of a child like myself being any obstacle to the movements of Mr. Vernon. 'And why not?' persisted Lord Dartford. 'As there is nothing to prevent your sister becoming his wife, except that Miss Hamlyn appears to have too good taste to throw herself away on a prig, I am pretty sure he would order post-horses and fly the country on the strength of your invitation!' Both Lord Dartford and Walter then began to quiz Mr. Vernon as a coxcomb. So that, in spite of Lady Vernon's anxiety to promote her son's intimacy with Walter, and spare the ex-

posure of our groom to the weather *she* was not afraid to encounter, I fear an excuse will have to be forwarded to-night across Braxham Ferry!"

Most probably; but from Colonel Hamilton, not from your brother. I am persuaded Walter will go. Even were he disinclined for the party, his father would persuade him."

At that moment Mr. Hamlyn, who had been occupied with business in his justice-room, made his appearance to inquire the purport of Lady Vernon's visit; and in the mere consciousness of having just uttered his name, the cheeks of his wife became suffused at his sudden entrance. The suspicions of the mistrustful man were instantly awakened. Certain that he was the subject of the conversation which had stopped short on his arrival, and unaccustomed at present to regard his daughter as more than a child, he could not support the idea of confidence between Lydia and her mother in which *his* name had mention.

"Lady Vernon appears to have communicated very astounding intelligence," said he, examining the countenances of both with a degree of severity that increased their confusion.

"She surprised me, certainly," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, trying to rally her spirits, "by coming out in such weather merely to invite Colonel Hamilton and Walter to dine to-morrow at the Hyde!"

"Colonel Hamilton? Why, they are not even acquainted," retorted her husband.

"She left Lord Vernon's card for him in proper form, and a written invitation for both."

"Very unaccountable!" cried Mr. Hamlyn, shrugging his shoulders, stung with his usual jealousy at the idea of the nabob receiving attentions likely to extend his connexions with society. A moment's reflection, however, suggested that, since it was impossible to suppress the invitation, his best policy was to assume the credit of having suggested the civility of the Vernons towards a friend and guest of his family.

"I have to ask a favour of you, my dear colonel," cried he, addressing the old gentleman, who at that moment made his appearance with Walter, after whom he had been hobbling in his morning's duck shooting. Lord Vernon is anxious you should waive ceremony as a country neighbour, and accompany my son to-morrow, in a friendly way, to dine and sleep at the Hyde. His lordship is an invalid, or would have made the invitation in person. Lady Vernon, however, has been here as his delegate, entreating Mrs. Hamlyn's interference to obtain your assent."

Poor Lydia, amazed at this fluent exposition, gazed in utter consternation, first at her father, and then upon the old gentleman it purported to deceive.

"It was my Lady Vernon's carriage, then, we saw passing the lodge as we came out of Woodfield Hanger," cried he. "Such folly, such ostentation! outriders in a frost that might split a flint!"

"She came only to leave these two cards of invitation for yourself and my son," resumed Mr. Hamlyn, in an extenuating tone.

Walter, who had been disencumbering himself of his shooting paraphernalia in the hall, now entered, his handsome face radiant with exercise, to receive his share of the explanation; but the self-possessed London man was

cautious not to betray his surprise in exclamation.

"Very cool, upon my word," said he, "to fancy any one would leave a comfortable fire-side, in such weather as this, to join a family dinner-party half a dozen miles off!" Satisfied that his father would not hear of his refusing an invitation from the Vernons, and that he should be compelled to follow his inclinations, he threw himself into an armchair with an air of indignation at the unexpected presumption of the Hyde.

With all the candour of girlhood, Lydia exchanged a triumphant glance with her mother, exultingly implying, "You were wrong. My brother has too much spirit, you see, dear mother, to be at the beck of such people as the Vernons."

"It is certainly a somewhat unceremonious invitation," gravely observed Mr. Hamlyn. "But at your age, Walter, weather or distance seldom form an obstacle to a pleasant engagement; and Lord Vernon, having known you from a boy, feels, of course, entitled to treat you with greater freedom."

"But he has not known Colonel Hamilton, sir, from a boy," remonstrated Walter; "and I must say—"

"Aware of the long-standing friendship between Hamilton and myself," interrupted the banker, "he builds perhaps upon the old adage, 'the friends of my friends are my own.' At all events, it is clear that the liberty he has taken arises from the commendable desire of establishing a footing of good neighbourhood between Burlington Manor and the Hyde."

"'Tisn't the want of ceremony would prevent my going," observed Colonel Hamilton, heartily; "on the contrary, the only thing that pleases me in the invitation is the free-and-easy style on't, which is better than I expected from the great don at the Hyde. I'm beginning to have a handsomer notion of the family, 'pon my life. However, this weather is *not* the thing for a long drive in pumps and silk stockings."

"As there are beds offered, you would, of course, drive over to dress," pleaded Mr. Hamlyn. "My horses would take you there in forty minutes."

Lydia fixed her eyes anxiously on the face of the old man thus plausibly tempted. Though wholly unconscious of the blunder which had occurred concerning Lord Dartford's invitation, she felt that the warm, frank nature of her excellent friend would be out of place among all these artificial people. Nothing but awe of her father prevented her from darting forward with an entreaty to Colonel Hamilton that he would not be beguiled into a visit to the Hyde.

Aware of his innate sociability, she discerned, with regret, symptoms of relenting in his countenance. An invitation of *any* kind had been for many years so unattainable a pleasure with him, that the abstract idea had not yet lost its charm. He could not bear to say "no" to any man sufficiently well-disposed towards him to invite him to dinner.

"Well, Master Watty, what say ye to all this?" cried he, addressing Captain Hamlyn, who sat balancing himself with a supercilious air in his chair, divided between his inclination to snatch the olive-branch tendered by the Vernons, and his dread of appearing at the Hyde in company with such an Ostrogoth as the colonel. "If you choose to take the chance of a damp

bed in Lord Vernon's old ghost-hole of a Manor-house, I'm your man! From the day of my arrival in the county, these people have always been doing one civil thing to me or another. Moreover, this is the first opportunity I've had of seeing your high-flying London ladies, which, to my notion, is worth the hazard of a catarrh."

On a hint from his father, Walter suffered himself to be victimized.

"It is unlucky enough," said he, carelessly, as he left the room to dress for dinner, "that Dartford should have been forced to hurry away this morning by the news of his mother's illness, for his being here would have afforded a pretext for refusing; a pretext not very satisfactory to the Vernons, however, for I remember that, in London, they were always besetting him with attentions."

Even under the heavy infliction of a great fall of snow at Christmas, the country-houses of England are unquestionably the most "comfortable" residences in the world; ineffable temples of egotism, whereof the most scientific architects and upholsterers of the day tax their invention to polish the corners so as to defy the influence of all seasons and their change. In these cozy burrows of privileged self-love, all is effected with patent precision; and miracles are wrought by the more than magic influence of the golden rod, to confer upon some isolated mansion and its park those condensed attractions and enjoyments which other countries seek in the colonization of cities, or the sparkle and animation of the courts of kings.

To the influence of fox-hunting, a pursuit which, under the molestations of railroads and other modern contingencies, is said (laud we the gods!) to be on the decline, is usually attributed the peculiarity of taste which exiles English families into the denuded country at the most unpropitious moment of the year. But the real secret of their delight in their country-seats is an instinct of exclusivism; a pride in the self-sufficient dignity of a well-ordered home, in which the social circle may be as fastidiously select as they think proper.

The noble owner of some fine castle glories in making it *almost* as agreeable to his guests as a mansion in Grosvenor Square, by bringing down daily from town the freshest London fish and London scandal, the last new books and engravings, periodicals and caricatures. Just as the Chinese embellish their little, flat, sandy gardens with artificial rocks and factitious mountains, the hard-working entertainer of a fashionable Christmas party exercises his laborious ingenuity that nothing may be wanting in his country house ("his country-house") which his friend might not have enjoyed better in town.

With the thermometer below freezing point, so as to neutralize the effect of any possible superiority of atmosphere, and imprison the weary guests within the over-stoved house, the captives continue to smile encouragingly upon each other's sufferings; and though inexpressibly weary of themselves and each other, persist in congratulating their host on the superior sociability of a country party in winter time, endeavouring by their laboured vivacity to disguise the growing oppression of their spirits.

"After all, we shall not find it so dreadfully dull here!" was Lady Vernon's consolatory apostrophe to her daughter on the morning they were expecting their new guests, casting an approving glance at the exotics with which the

zealous groom of the chambers had decorated the apartments, and the blazing fires which diffused a cheerful glow over the costly but gloomy hangings. "Your father, in one of his fits of hypochondriacism, determined that (in consequence of the expenses of Alberic's election, and those few miserable *fêtes* he authorized me to give in London for your *début* we should have no regular Christmas party here this winter, that is, no one but *my* family and his. But the Middleburys will fill the house for a week, and afford a pretext for inviting stragglers from the hunt, and persuading Dartford to prolong his visit: luckily enough, by-the-way; for Lord Vernon is always so out of spirits or so out of humour (which *he* calls a flying gout), that, had we been *quite* alone, I should scarcely have ventured the invitation."

"Have you said anything about it to papa?" inquired the fair Lucinda, arranging her worktable in elegant confusion, so as to secure being discovered in a becoming attitude.

"I told him it was indispensable to invite a few young men; for that, if Alberic were our *only* beau, he would find his cousins a horrible *corvée*."

"Papa would certainly like few things less than a match between my brother and Susan or Fanny Middlebury," replied Miss Vernon. "Family intermarriages I have always heard him attack as lopping off the main branch of a tree."

"Not more than he disapproved my having invited young Hamlyn. He has had election squabbles with the family, and dislikes the Dean Park people as upstarts and pretenders."

"But papa cannot call Lord Dartford an upstart or pretender?"

"He seems to think all the less of him for being the bosom friend of the banker's son. In order to avoid being obliged to talk to young Hamlyn, therefore, he insisted on having to dinner to-day the Barlows of Alderham, whom we never ask above once during our stay at the Hyde, as a matter of ceremony, to keep up the agent's respectability in the county."

"What people to meet Lord Dartford! And do they *come*?"

"The woman Barlow is ill, and excuses herself (I do not suppose she finds her visits here *very* agreeable.) The husband comes, I am happy to say, for he is a rational sort of person, who helps one amazingly through the dinner-talking, and will be at the trouble of answering Sir Henry Middlebury's eternal questions. One is obliged to have somebody belonging to the house qualified to discuss farming and poor-laws (which Lord Vernon will not trouble himself to do) for the country gentlemen."

"Sir Henry is certainly a dreadful bore," observed Lucinda. "And then he looks so like a churchwarden—so spruce, and wiggly, and respectable. But how are we to manage, dear mamma, about Lord Dartford? Of course he must take *you* out, and Aunt Middlebury and Fanny will sit on either side papa. But *pray* tell Alberic to place Susan Middlebury on the side opposite the fire; upon which, on pretence of being cold, I can take the vacant place next to Lord Dartford. Sir Henry, who will take me in to dinner, is much too great a wiseacre to notice what is going on."

Scarcely was the plan of the opening campaign adjusted, when the clang of the hall bell became audible.

"The Middleburys so early?" exclaimed Miss Vernon. "What *manque d'usage*!"

"They could not well manage otherwise," said Lady Vernon. "My sister wrote me word they were to sleep at Uplands, which is only thirty miles from hence; and, being obliged to start after breakfast, as there was a party in the house, she is forced to arrive here an hour too soon. With her sister, she felt privileged to take such a liberty."

The Middleburys were not people qualified to make the embarrassing hour, when newly-arriving guests are neither at home nor company, pass more pleasantly; or, rather, there was something in the hollowness and heartlessness of the Vernons which imposed constraint even on their family connexions. Sir Henry was simply a painstaking and rather solemn country-gentleman, so eager to do everything in the right way, and according to the most approved principles, that he stretched himself upon a rack of perpetual experiment. Absorbed in the study of all the new systems and patent inventions of the day, he was either absent in society, or roused himself only to bore people, till they wished him absent, by the development of his crotchety speculations.

His lady-wife was a *collet monté* of prudery and rigid education-monger, who, having lived for the last twenty years enveloped in a severe course of governesses and masters, regarded her two pretty daughters rather as the result of her excellent Trimmerism than as pleasant companions or affectionate children. Every careless word uttered by Susan and Fanny was instantly submitted by their mother to rigid analysis, and referred back to some entry in her education-leger. Any rash notice of a rainy day was connected by mamma with their early doses of Mrs. Marcel's Conversations on Atmospheric Phenomena; nor could Susan take out her leaded netting-cushion without producing a cross-examination from her mother on the first principles of mechanics, as imbibed (with their bread and milk) from the dialogues of Joyce.

Held in this precise maternal subordination, the two girls, though naturally cheerful, unaffected creatures, had become as stiff and starched as the farthingaled maids of honour of Queen Elizabeth. This was their first visit to the Hyde; and, being still guiltless of a London season, they stood in considerable awe of their cousin, Lucinda Vernon, whom they knew to be one of the fashionable beauties of the day. Seated on the edges of their chairs, glancing ever and anon at Lady Middlebury for signals to regulate their answers and deportment, the two poor girls looked almost as much in torment as if undergoing the process of thumb-screwing.

Miss Vernon was, however, in the mood to be gracious, even to her country cousins. Flattered into high spirits by Lord Dartford's unexpected arrival in Warwickshire, she entertained little doubt of bagging her bird while thus sporting on her own manor, and upheld by her own keepers. A high-bred girl is never seen to greater advantage than when assisting to do the honours of her father's country house; and the good-humoured, open character of Dartford rendering it indispensable to eschew all imputation of coldness or hauteur, she welcomed Susan and Fanny as cordially as though she were about to stand for their county, inquired cousinishly after their little brothers and sisters, hoped they had

brought their music with them, and tried to beguile the time till the dressing-bell by exhibiting the *façetie* of Messrs. Jabot, Vieuxbois, Crépin, De la Linottière, and the divers other albums of platitudes invented to supply topics of conversation for a tongue-tied country house.

The two simple-hearted girls were enchanted. Already the numbness engendered by a long drive in a severe frost, and the repeated exhortations of Lady Middlebury, previous to their arrival, that they should sit straight, hold up their heads, and attend to the use of the subjunctive mood, was beginning to give way, and the long-dreaded visit to Aunt and Uncle Vernon, which was to be the crowning probation of their accomplishments, to lose a portion of its terrors. The Hyde, though mentioned in history, and engraved in picture-books, was no such very alarming place after all; and, provided their cousin Alberic, the travelled man, did not examine them *very* severely in their Italian and German, or Lord and Lady Vernon stand behind them during their execution of their grand duet in C minor, they trusted they might get through their week without *much* agony of body or spirit.

Just, however, as they were becoming acclimatized to the snug morning-room, and beginning to wonder whether the chaise-seats were unpacked, and the maid waiting in their dressing-room, in stalked Lord Vernon, looking a thousand domestic tragedies, and with the countenance of Count Ugolino on the eve of devouring his children.

In vain did the Middleburys rise from their seats to be welcomed and noticed. With every previous disposition to bear with fortitude the visitation of his wife's family, his lordship could scarcely command his feelings of irritation sufficiently to be civil.

"Will you be so very obliging as to peruse *this*, and explain its meaning," said he, addressing Lady Vernon in a tone of wounded dignity, startling even to his unimpressable daughter, and placing an open note in her hand; whereupon the lady of the house, amid the general silence of the room, cast her eyes over a few lines, indited on thick wire-wove, in a clerkly hand, to the following tremendous purport:

"Dean Park, Thursday morning.

"Colonel Hamilton and Captain Hamlyn will have the honour of dining with Lord and Lady Vernon this day, at half past seven; and of accepting her ladyship's polite offer of beds at the Hyde."

Nothing very obscure or involved in the phrasing of the note! Yet, succinct and straightforward as it was, Lady Vernon chose to read it over a second time ere she formed any very decided conclusions about the matter; and, on once more attaining the full stop following the fatal words "the Hyde," almost wished it could have been prolonged into the prolixity of one of Sir Charles Grandison's epistles, so embarrassing did she find her situation with regard to her justly irritated spouse.

The preceding night, she had duly announced to Lord Vernon that the Marquis of Dartford was coming to join the Middlebury party at the Hyde; hinting that, with such a snow on the ground, and such a capital billiard-table in the house, it would be their own fault if he quitted them otherwise than as the declared lover of

their daughter, which exposition must be fresh in the remembrance of the indignant Lord Vernon. Nor was the impression less vivid in her own, that, a few days before their journey into Warwickshire, his lordship had observed to *her*, "We have got a new neighbour at the Hyde—a purse-proud nabob—a vulgar friend of Hamlyn the banker. I find from Barlow that he has been intruding, and making himself troublesome to the keepers, having, as a tenant of the Burlingtons, been allowed the usual privileges. We must, of course, exchange cards with this person, but I shall take especial care that the acquaintance goes no farther."

And it was after this marital warning she had to account for inviting the purse-proud nabob to dine and sleep in the most familiar manner at the Hyde!

"I fear there must have been some unfortunate mistake," said she, at length summoning courage for the confession of her offences. "Alberic informed me yesterday that Lord Dartford was staying at Dean Park, and I thought the opportunity a good one for inviting him here. I was mistaken—my son was mistaken—we were all mistaken. My card of invitation appears to have reached the wrong person."

"Wrong indeed!—the horrible Bengal tiger of Burlington Manor! However, since it *was* a mistake, a mistake it shall remain. I will instantly write and explain for *whom* the invitation was really intended. No occasion for us to be entangled in so unsatisfactory an acquaintance."

"Certainly not!" burst in faint murmurs from the lips of all present, in reply to an interrogatory glance addressed by Lord Vernon in succession to the whole circle.

But Lady Vernon, though apparently assentient among the rest, no sooner saw her husband direct his steps towards the writing-table, and open the lid of the envelope case, evidently with the most epistolary intentions, than she experienced qualms of conscience.

"After all," said she, "it is no fault of Colonel Hamilton's that Mrs. Hamlyn should have fancied it was *him* I intended to designate as 'the friend staying with them at Dean.'"

"I am convinced the whole affair is an impertinent mystification, preconceived on the part of the Hamlyns," persisted Lord Vernon. "It is only to me such adventures ever happen. I am certainly the most unlucky person in the world. A man actually invited to dine in my house, whom I never beheld in my life, and whom I had expressly pointed out to my family as an object of avoidance."

"Colonel Hamilton is universally respected in the neighbourhood, I find," pleaded Lady Vernon. "Even Mr. Barlow was mentioning yesterday how active and useful they found him as a magistrate."

"There is, surely, no occasion for me to have all the useful magistrates in the county quartered in my house," snarled her lord, still rustling the blotting-book.

"Any insult offered to such a man, however, would only recoil upon ourselves."

"Who talked of offering him an insult? I simply intend to state that the invitation he has received was intended for the Marquis of Dartford, and that he is under a mistake."

"Which amounts to a request that he will not come and dine here to-day. What is such a prohibition *but* an insult?" exclaimed Lady Vernon.

"It is your own fault. You should have been more explicit. People cannot be too explicit about dinner-invitations. Why, so vague a definition as 'the friend staying at Dean Park' might have brought down upon us something far less reputable in the way of acquaintance than this East India colonel—some of Mr. Hamlyn's city connexions, for instance."

"Certainly, it was very careless: on the whole, we may consider ourselves fortunate that it is no worse," said Lady Vernon, trusting that her husband was beginning to mollify, so very fastidious did he show himself in the selection of a pen.

"We met Lord Dartford changing horses at Barsthorpe this morning, the first stage from Uplands," said Sir Henry Middlebury. "The postmaster asked leave to give his lordship the first turn-out, as he had been sent for express, it seems, to Dartford Hall, the marchioness being dangerously ill. I noticed his lordship's carriage; because, to my surprise, it had neither Collinge's axles, nor grasshopper springs. I was assured that, in London, no carriages were built nowadays without Collinge's patent axles and grasshopper springs. I had a new one from Leader last spring, solely with a view to a crane neck (the Comte de Bambis, when he was staying at Middlebury Park, having been greatly surprised that, with *our* narrow turn-in, we should venture on a carriage without a crane-neck); and I was beginning to be afraid I was again in the wrong box, my new coach having neither Collinge's axles nor grasshopper springs. But when I saw that the Marquis of Dartford, who, as one of the richest, is, I conclude, one of the most fashionable young men of the day, had neither Collinge's axles nor grasshopper springs, I instantly observed to Lady Middlebury—"

"If I might venture to hazard a remark on the subject," observed Lady Vernon aside to her husband, lowering her voice and leaning over his chair, so as not to interrupt the drowsy prosification of her brother-in-law, "I should strongly advise your receiving Colonel Hamilton as though no error had occurred. Reflect what a triumph it would afford the people at Dean Park to find that we had been anxious to attract a guest like young Dartford out of *their* house. Think what a history they would make of it in their vulgar circles. But if they were able to add that we had treated with ill-breeding an old gentleman, an old soldier, guiltless of offence towards us, and no less than ourselves betrayed into the scrape, the fault would be wholly on our side in the opinion of the world."

"I should certainly be sorry," replied Lord Vernon, whose first explosion of ire having subsided, he was beginning to sink into his usual apathetic distaste for scenes and explanations, or the exertion of note-writing and sending; "I should be seriously annoyed, indeed, that any occurrence at the Hyde justified Mr. Hamlyn, the banker, in mixing up my name with the history of his hospitalities at Dean Park. Perhaps, therefore, on the whole, it will be best to pass over this offensive mistake as lightly as possible."

"A man of Colonel Hamilton's age can never be so objectionable an acquaintance as a younger person, particularly as regards Alberic and Inda," pleaded Lady Vernon, greatly relieved. "Besides, it will be easy to receive this new neighbour of ours in so formal a manner as to give him little inclination for returning to the Hyde."

"I fear you are right," rejoined his lordship, tearing up the note he had commenced, and crossing the room to throw the fragments into the fire. "All that remains for us is to submit heroically to the evil. If Colonel Hamilton be an intentional intruder, my coldness will afford him a proper rebuke, and preserve us from farther advances should the whole affair have been as accidental as you suppose."

The dressing-bell having now rung, the party dispersed, the poor Middlebury girls horror-struck anew by the grandeur of so august an uncle and aunt, and fearing they should never hold their heads high enough, preserve sufficient decorum, or execute the chromatic scale with sufficient accuracy for the satisfaction of a family so fastidious.

Such was the circle into which the warm-hearted and hospitable Colonel Hamilton was about to become an involuntary intruder.

CHAPTER VII.

The highest life is oft a dreary void,
A rack of pleasures where we must invent
A something wherewithal to be annoy'd.
Bards may sing what they will about "Content!"
"Contented," when translated, means but "cloy'd,"
And hence arise the woes of sentiment.

BROWN.

By George! these nobs know how to manufacture a pleasant berth for themselves," exclaimed Colonel Hamilton to his young companion, when, after emerging from the long, dark avenue, after a drive of three quarters of an hour over the moonlit snow, they came upon the fine *façade* of the venerable mansion, every window of which seemed radiant with reflected light. "Your father was quite right. The distance is a mere trifle. In my fur cloak, I vow I've been as snug as by my parlour fire. After all, what signifies a frostbitten nose when a pleasant, sociable party's in the wind?"

The glowing hall into which they were now ushered, and the troop of highly-disciplined servants in attendance, perfected his elation of spirit. It had been settled that, unaccustomed at present to the ways of the house, they should arrive dressed for dinner; and, as they had made their appearance with military exactness, the drawing-room contained, on the entrance of the punctual guests, only a blazing fire, a profusion of light, and the morning papers just arrived from town, which the groom of the chambers officiously placed on the table nearest the old gentleman, whose liberal housekeeping and open-handed habits secured him far higher renown in the steward's rooms of the neighbourhood than awaited many a man of loftier announcement.

"The Morning Chronicle of to-day, I vow and declare," cried Colonel Hamilton, instantly ensconcing himself in an armchair, which he drew towards the fire, to the serious detriment of the symmetrical arrangements of the room; then, taking out his spectacles to make himself perfectly comfortable, "I wonder I never thought of getting down the morning papers by the day-coach!" said he, addressing over his shoulder the dismayed Walter, who stood elegant and graceful on the hearth-rug, in his well-starcked white cravat and well-cut black coat. "Why, 'twould have shortened by half those deuced long winter evenings. Ay, ay, let these lords

alone for taking care of themselves! But, bless me! what have we got here? 'OVERLAND MAIL FROM INDY?' Why, 'twasn't expected these three days. By George! 'By EXTRAORDINARY EXPRESS.' And I shouldn't have known an item about the matter afore to-morrow morning but for coming here. So, so, so!"

"And, with his legs comfortably crossed, and a heavy silver candlestick taken from the table interposed between his spectacled nose and the newspaper, the colonel gave himself up, heart, soul, and body, to the ecstatic enjoyments of a *quidnunc*—enjoyments only fully understood by those who have passed their lives in a remote colony; when, lo! the drawing-room door was thrown open by the page, and in stalked Lady Vernon, majestic in point and black velvet, arrayed in costume and countenance as for the part of Lady Macbeth. Closely following came the Middlebury girls, like her pale and awe-struck maids in waiting, having been loitering in the vestibule for want of courage to enter the drawing-room uncountenanced by one of the family.

Never had the good address of Walter Hamlyn proved more available than at that moment. His gentlemanly and unembarrassed manner of accepting the formal welcome of the lady of the house placed him at once before her eyes as Captain Hamlyn of the Blues, the friend of Lord Dartford, and effaced all trace of the banker's son of Dean Park; thus affording to the poor old colonel leisure to recover his equilibrium, and perform his part, in due form, in the ceremony of presentation to Lady Vernon.

It was only the Middleburys who, while Walter was undergoing the interrogatory of the lofty lady in black velvet concerning the health of his family, had opportunity to note the embarrassed attitude of the startled guest, not knowing how to disencumber himself of the silver branch and newspaper, or the spectacles on his nose, in time to execute his obeisances, with becoming alacrity, to the lady paramount of the Hyde.

Luckily, the page, who was now holding open the door for Lady Middlebury, rustling forward, like a ship in a north easter, arrayed in a dozen breadths of well-bounced Gros de Naples, perceived the old gentleman's embarrassment, and hastened to relieve him of at least one portion of his burden; so that, by the time Walter Hamlyn, after casting an agonized glance at the colonel to ascertain his present whereabouts, ventured to ask leave to present to her ladyship Colonel Hamilton, of Burlington Manor, he was quite prepared to offer his acknowledgments for the friendly and unceremonious manner in which, as a new comer into the neighbourhood, he had been invited by Lord Vernon to his house.

To impute any connivance in a scheme of imposition to this outspoken, grayheaded old soldier, was out of the question. His delinquency was consequently limited, for the present, in Lady Vernon's eyes, to the free and easy manner in which he seemed to recognise his right to be at home under her roof. Though previously resolved to meet the friend of Lord Dartford's friend with a degree of formal courtesy, rendering it equally impossible for him to complain or encroach, she had scarcely patience with the ready freedom with which the stranger had drawn her own pet *fauveuil* of ebony, incrustated with ivory, into the trying blaze of a

tremendous fire, in order to read her own paper by the light of her own candelabrum.

Sir Henry Middlebury and Lord Vernon soon made their appearance. Entering the room side by side, like the two kings of Brentford, and being unluckily presented at the same time to the colonel by his lady hostess, an involuntary confusion arose in his mind as to the identity of the parties. He knew not which was Prince Volscius, which Prince Pretymen; and Sir Henry, a tall, good-looking, sententious, portly man, happening to embody his preconception of the noble owner of the Hyde, he set down as the country baronet the stunted peer, who, in spite of his efforts to appear with a degree of dignity fitting the occasion, had contracted, from his habitual dissatisfaction at the things of this world, so sour an expression of countenance, that he looked only a little more mean and sullen than usual.

It was to the former, therefore, as the more promising interlocutor, that the colonel began instantly to unfold the excitement of his mind, under the influence of the news brought by the overland mail; and he talked, of course, with all the prejudice and exaggeration of a man of moderate judgment, who had been contemplating, through life, a single side of a single question, unmodified by the qualifying influences of society.

Overflowing with the righteous indignation enkindled by a fiery leading article commenting on the Indian news brought by the express, over which he had scarcely found time to glance, his ardent feelings relieved themselves in a philippic against the governor-general for his sanction of certain local abuses, concerning which no mortal present was more interested than if they had occurred among the natives of Nootka Sound. Amazed by this sudden explosion of politics and petulance, the party listened in silent and contemptuous wonder, as they would have done to the rantings of a provincial Sir Giles Overreach.

"His lordship ought to be instantly recalled, impeached, condemned—his lordship ought to be hanged, drawn, and quartered!" was the unmeaning denunciation of the mildest man on earth, under the contagion of newspaper virulence; and as it happened that the sole interest experienced by the Vernon family in the affairs of the East consisted in cousinship to the offending governor-general in question, a frown contracted the brows of the elder, and a smile the lips of the younger members of the astonished family, while listening to the diatribes of the colonel.

At that moment (the fair Lucinda and Barlow of Alderham having made their appearance) dinner was luckily announced; when, alas! the previous ceremonial, decreed with more than a lord-chamberlain's exactness of etiquette by Lady Vernon, in honour of Lord Dartford's expected presence, was afflictively superseded by the exit of Lady Middlebury on the arm of her lord, and her own on that of her brother-in-law.

"Darby and Joan fashion, I protest!" was Colonel Hamilton's secret commentation on the order of the procession. "And so the folks here go in to dinner in couples, for all the world like Mr. and Mrs. Hém, Shem, and Japhet, in the children's toy of Noah's Ark! Well, among such high-flying people, hang me but 'tis a better feeling than I should have expected."

While musing, however, on this singularly

conjugal arrangement, he forgot to offer his arm to Miss Vernon, who, gladly accepting that of Walter Hamlyn, waited politely for her cousins to pass before her. In this dilemma, the two poor, shy Middlebury girls glanced at each other awkwardly for mutual instructions, and having suddenly agreed to edge their way onward together like decanters in a coaster, the gallant old gentleman, roused from his reverie, pushed forward to the rescue, offered an arm to each, with many jocular expressions of regret that he could not cut himself in two for their sakes; and, on reaching the dining-room door, which, like those of most ancient houses, was ill adapted for the admission of three abreast, produced new confusion and delay by his boyish hilarity with the young ladies.

Walter Hamlyn, who was following close behind with the supercilious Lucinda on his arm, of whose *persiflage* he stood more in awe than became his inches and martial calling, had scarcely patience with the ill-timed, practical pleasantries of the veteran, to whom he was reluctantly officiating as bear-leader; more especially as, on reaching the brilliantly-lighted and sumptuous table, so calculated to impose decorum on its guests, the colonel's jokes were renewed in taking his seat and unfolding his napkin between the two stiff, frightened girls, whom the good old man unconsciously addressed in something of the fatherly tone he was in the habit of assuming towards his favourite Lydia at Dean Park.

The sole consolation of Walter in this predicament arose from the absence of the hyper-fastidious and super-impertinent young gentleman of the house; but, as an unexplained chair still stood vacant opposite, he indulged in justly-founded apprehensions that the pleasure of Alberic's company was an evil still impending over them. His doubts on this point were speedily resolved.

"I have not seen Alberic," observed Sir Henry Middlebury to his hostess, "since his return from the Continent."

"He will probably be here in time for the second course," observed Lady Vernon, in a tone of injured dignity. "We never wait for my son. Alberic is systematically unpunctual. Alberic is too late for everything."

"Then I must say that is a fault which, for his own sake, I should be loth to pass over in a son of mine!" exclaimed Colonel Hamilton, not understanding that, being under the ban of the empire, he had no voice in the diet. "It may seem an exaggerated assertion, but I vow to my Maker I've never known an unpunctual man come to good in public life; and, *vice-versa*, look at the punctual ones—look at Nelson and Wellington!"

As if in answer to the cue, Alberic Vernon, at that moment sauntering in, honoured his friends and relatives, as he took the vacant chair, with a nod of recognition, and Colonel Hamilton with a blank stare of amazement, which, when the courteous old man replied by an instinctive bow, assumed the form of one of John Kemble's salutations.

"Where is Dartford? I thought we were to have Dartford?" said he, addressing his sister across Walter Hamlyn; when Lady Vernon, dreading farther inquiries and explanations, abruptly silenced her son with "No; he was suddenly called away into Shropshire by the illness of his mother."

The question and answer, neither of which happened to be overheard by Colonel Hamilton (who was just then equally amused and bewildered by the multiplicity of fish-sauces pressed upon his choice by the *maitre d'hôtel*), and which, even had they reached his ear, would have conveyed nothing but regret that a youngster he so much liked as the marquis might have accompanied him to the Hyde but for his family affliction, contained a world of enlightenment for Walter Hamlyn. All that had been inexplicable in the irritation of Lady Vernon was now accounted for; and the pang inflicted upon his self-love was only exceeded by his uneasiness at finding himself an appendage to so every-way an unwelcome guest as the unsuspecting Colonel Hamilton.

Instead of redoubling his endeavours to make himself acceptable to his fair neighbour, Walter could not a moment divert his attention from the old gentleman opposite. Every syllable uttered, every gesture hazarded by the colonel, became a source of consternation. Before a sentence had half escaped his lips, Walter began to modify or explain its purport. He experienced, in short, all the trepidation endured by the proprietor of an ill-taught dog, which has accidentally made its way into a lady's drawing-room, and is tolerated by the politeness of the lady of the house every time the intruder seems about to perpetrate some new offence.

The candid nature of the old colonel secured him, however, from all participation in these perplexities. His innate sociability of spirit was expanding. In that well-warmed, well-lighted room, with a capital dinner before him, a glass of generous wine in his hand, and on either side a pleasing, modest-looking girl, he found himself perfectly happy; talked unreservedly, laughed cordially, and, after bantering Barlow of Alderham (who officiated as substitute for his patron in muttering the benediction and carving the haunch of South Downs) on divers petty points of county jurisdiction, ended by infringing another etiquette of the Hyde by inviting his hostess (and by the name of "my lady") to take a glass of Sherry.

Of all these enormities Lord Vernon remained a mute spectator, resigning himself to his injuries as if far too well-accustomed to the evil entreatment of Providence to resent being sprighted by a troublesome and intrusive guest. His ever sullen face was compressed almost to sternness, however, by his firm resolve not to be betrayed into open reprehension of Colonel Hamilton's vulgar familiarity.

To Walter Hamlyn's susceptible self-love, however, the conduct of Alberic Vernon on the occasion was still more mortifying. Assuming towards the stranger an air of ironical deference, he affected to regard him with the indulgence due to the newly-caught native of some uncivilized quarter of the globe, whose peculiarities form a matter for philosophical speculation to the world of broadcloth and brocade. Walter Hamlyn almost writhed under the supercilious expression of Mr. Vernon's countenance while affecting to draw out the eccentricities of their semi-savage guest.

It was torture to the banker's son every time the poor colonel apostrophized his stately hostess or her sister as "my lady;" nor could he forgive his mother for having omitted to school her careless friend on this and other futile points of conventional usage, with which the seclusion of

Colonel Hamilton's early life rendered him unfamiliar.

As the Champagne and Burgundy went round, the joviality of the sociable old man increased into the most chattering garrulity. He talked only as he had talked to the Rotherwoods—only as he had talked when commanding the admiring attention of young Dartford, little suspecting how thoroughly his anecdotes and mirthful ejaculations were out of place. Struck by the beauty of Lucinda Vernon, who was seated opposite, exhibiting an elegance of dress and deportment new to his unsophisticated eye, and naturally attributing to one so young and fair the inward and spiritual grace appropriate to innocence, youth, and beauty, he was overjoyed at the good fortune of his friend Walter in having so charming a companion.

"Well, Master Watty," said he, across the table, after inviting him to join him in a glass of the Hock which was just then carried round, "do you still repent your frosty drive? No, no, my boy! I suspect you know too well what's what, to quarrel with such a dinner, enjoyed by the side of such a young lady!"

The higher Colonel Hamilton's spirits, the more offensive, of course, became his company to those who, even had they found his manners more consonant with their own nature—"like *sable land, high and flat*"—would have been equally ill inclined to see him seated at their board.

In the course of the evening, matters grew worse and worse. The Vernons remained studiously cold and silent; the Middleburys, who, had Colonel Hamilton been a new settler in their own neighbourhood, would have welcomed him as a pleasant, chatty old gentleman, considered it a becoming token of respect to the displeasures of their noble relatives to treat him with distant civility. Albetric, who affected the fashionable *exclusiveness* of a misanthrope, afraid of compromising himself by exchanging a syllable with his cousins, devoted himself to the assiduous study of the new annals (in which his own honourableness figured as the contributor of some amusingly muzzy "*Musings in the Gollis-eum*"); while Captain Hamlyn and Lucinda, having their London friends to canvass and cry down, talked in whispers, and exclusively to each other. Thus thrown out of the circle, the colonel, with a happy knack accommodating himself to whatever circumstances he was placed in, and to extract "sermons from stones and good from everything," took refuge in a grave discussion between Sir Henry Middlebury and Mr. Barlow on the Briarstan question of pauper legislation, which, in the true country-gentleman spirit of worrying an argument as dogs worry a bone; they were fighting over inch by inch, and act of Parliament by act of Parliament.

The Benthamisms of Hamilton, fresh with the raw philosophy of a new and not very enlightened settler in England, were expressed with a degree of warmth, almost of indignation, absolutely startling to his sober hearers. Never before had Mr. Barlow heard the well-bred insipidity of that state apartment insulted by the emission of sentiments and principles so nearly approaching to Radicalism. With all due respect for the somewhat short-sighted benevolence of the old Indian, he considered his manifesto out of place, and declared his projects to be wholly inapplicable to the state of the county.

"I tell ye what!" cried Colonel Hamilton, suddenly appealing to Lord Vernon—the *real* Lord Vernon—whose identity he had discovered through the "my lordings" of the servants, and who now sat exchanging short, cold sentences, as round and smooth as marbles, with Lady Middlebury, as though the political economy tearing to rags within their hearing were frivolous, vexatious, and beneath his notice—"it may sound very wise and statesmanlike to say that such and such principles are inapplicable to a particular county or particular crisis; but, by George! human nature is human nature all over the world—ay, my lord, and from King Pharaoh's time till our own! One's fellow-creatures are one's fellow-creatures—one's brethren—whether they live in Lancashire or Cornwall; and, to my thinking, such measures as were shown up to-day at the Union at Braxham, and the county member who defended the county magistrates when the question was mooted in Parliament, will have something to answer for afore God!"

A dead silence followed this awful denunciation, from which Sir Henry Middlebury justly concluded that Barlow of Alderham was one of the magistrates in question, Alberic Vernon the offending county member; and being by no means anxious to figure as second in a duel to any of the parties, he accordingly hastened to him, with precipitate incoherence, that "by the time Colonel Hamilton had been a few years longer in England, he might probably alter his views considerably on many points connected with the giant-striding claims of the poor."

"I hope not—I humbly hope not!" was Colonel Hamilton's eager rejoinder. But Sir Henry heard him not. He was now exemplifying in a double sense his love of harmony by inquiring of Miss Vernon whether she and his daughters would not "favour them with a little music;" the country baronet avowing himself so great a rustic as to treat of "a little music" as "a great favour!"

Unaware that a request of this kind, in mixed society, implies a desire to put a stop to rational conversation, Colonel Hamilton was not to be so silenced. Resuming his appeal to Lord Vernon, after toddling across the room to throw himself beside his lordship on the sofa, "I've often thought, since I came into this neighbourhood," said he, in a more confidential tone, "that if you and I, my lord, and a few more of the influential landed proprietors, were to—"

"I was not aware, sir," gravely interrupted Lord Vernon, drawing away the knee on which his strange neighbour had inflicted a familiar tap, in the exuberance of his philanthropic zeal, "that you were a landed proprietor of the county of Warwick."

"Pho, pho! you know what I mean! I've got to live, and die, and spend fifteen thousand a year among ye; and if that isn't an equivalent to landed proprietorship, I don't know what is! I've thought many a time, my lord, as I was saying just now, that if we were all to lay our heads together, some plan might certainly be hit upon for—"

"You must do me the favour to excuse me, sir!" said Lord Vernon, coldly, rising from his seat. "I am so unfortunate as to hear these questions too often debated in my place in Parliament, and among the responsible representatives of the throne, to have much appetite for bringing them on the tapis of my own drawing-

room. 'Points of which the collective wisdom of the realm is perpetually engaged in the consideration, are scarcely likely, I fear, to derive much elucidation from *our* puny attempts at development. If you are fond of parochial legislation, I must beg to refer you for *my* share of the argument, as I universally do your friend Mr. Hamlyn, to the abler hands of my worthy agent, Mr. Barlow of Alderham. Mr. Barlow, sir, will, I am sure, be happy to meet you in any discussion you may wish to promote. Lady Vernon! we are waiting your commands for whist. Alberic! may I ask the favour of you to ring for cards?'

Whist levels all distinctions, and silences all argumentation. Under its influence, the dull, constrained evening at length concluded; and but that, on stepping out of the carriage, Colonel Hamilton had given orders that his own might be sent for him at eleven the following day, gladly would he have returned to sleep at Dean Park. Though still unsuspecting that he was an uninvited guest, he could not stand the repellent reserve of the Vernons. It was the first specimen of fashionable superciliousness he had ever met with, and the hollowness of such a reception wounded him like a poisoned *kreese*.

"I could almost fancy the old don intended to be uncivil to-night!" mused the colonel, in silence, while his faithful Johnston was assisting him to undress. Yet *how* could that be? *Why* invite me to his house? *Why* make me free of his park on my first arrival? *Why* send his wife to leave a card upon me, if he intended to be uppish? No, no, 'tis the way of these fine folks! They're *born* so—they're nat'rally ungracious. By George! Mrs. Hamlyn was right. These Vernons are as little suited to me as I to them."

In spite of all his distaste, however, for the hauteur of the house, Colonel Hamilton was not blind to its merits. He was favourably impressed by the peculiar air of distinction of the ladies of the family, and the admirable organization of the household. It had not before occurred to him as possible that anything so perfect in its details as that dinner could be produced, served, and enjoyed with such mechanical nonchalance. The step or voice of a menial was unheard in the establishment; the servants appeared to be no more than ingenious machines; yet even his unspoken wishes had been divined and accomplished. He would have been sorry to mortify Johnston by avowing how thoroughly he recognised the merit of those well-powdered magicians.

"'Tis vexatious enough these folks should turn out so deused disagreeable!" was his concluding reflection, as he closed his eyes for the night. "It would have afforded a pleasant change for us all, to be on friendly terms with the family at the Hyde."

The morrow's sun rose glittering over fresh-fallen snow, as bright and cheerful as a day in June; and it was, consequently, difficult for a man of good dispositions, like Colonel Hamilton, to rise from a good bed to a good breakfast after a good night's rest, in an ill humour with himself or his neighbours. Colonel Hamilton was not in the habit of living on bad terms with Providence. While viewing the varied afflictions of the human kind, he had not courage to sulk, like Lord Vernon, with his prosperous fortunes, and accordingly proceeded, with a heart over-brimming with milk and honey, to the

breakfast-room, where the uncongenial crew were gradually reassembling.

"This is all mon'sous pleasant!" said he, after going through the customary morning salutations, and slapping Walter Hamlyn on the back, while inquiring whether no pretty face had embellished the tenour of his dreams. "One could almost fancy one's self in summer, or in Indy," he continued, pointing with his breakfast-fork to a beautiful conservatory opening from the room, and bright with Persian lilacs, camellias, and hyacinths of every dye.

"The march of science has unquestionably enabled us to defy the influence of the seasons," replied the sententious Sir Henry Middlebury, perceiving that no one was at the trouble of answering an observation addressed to all. "The Epicureans of the ancient world would in all probability be somewhat startled, could they arise from their tombs and survey the luxurious improvement of our social habits. As regards, however, the introduction of conservatories among the adjuncts of domestic architecture, I am inclined to believe the gaseous emanations of the majority of the floral tribes decidedly inimical to the salubrity of the atmosphere."

Colonel Hamilton, who seldom bothered his brain with polysyllables, and knew no more of "gaseous emanations" than a New Zealander, pursued his own view of the question, addressing his observations, however, to the real Simon Pure, to whom he was indebted for the cup of smoking coffee before him.

"I often used to think, my lord," said he, "when I came driving and strolling about your place, while you were away at t'other castle in the North, that this must make a mighty grim, damp sort of winter residence. But I vow and protest you've not only banished the blue devils, but made it every bit as liveable a place as Burlington Manor or Dean Park. It must have cost a mint of money to modernize it as you've done, inside, without altering the cut of its countenance. But the attempt has answered—by George! it has answered. I was saying last night to Mr. Thingumee, your agent, that, if the place had been on hire, I'd almost as lief have taken it as Burlington Manor. *I would*, upon my life and soul!"

Walter Hamlyn glanced instinctively at the silver coffee-pot, standing at Lord Vernon's elbow, as if half expecting to see it hurled at the head of the offender. But his lordship contented himself with replying, with a deadly smile and livid complexion, "Sir, you do me infinitely too much honour."

"Not a bit—not a bit," cried the colonel, full of good faith and feeling; "you may believe every syllable that falls from *my* lips. I'm a rough diamond, I know, but *true* as unpolished."

Though he had almost determined, on leaving his room that morning, not to exchange another syllable while they remained at the Hyde with his unpopular companion, Walter now judged it prudent to interfere, and draw off the attention of the parties.

"I have charming news for your sledging project, Colonel Hamilton," said he. "Lord Vernon's venerable head-keeper has just announced to me that the frost has set in for a fortnight—and old Tom Giles is an oracle! A sad prospect for us!" continued he, addressing young Vernon, who had just sauntered into the room, and was asking for rizzled haddock.

"No chance of a run, I fear, for some time to come!"

"By George! if I'd known of this last night," cried the colonel, "I'd have sent word to Burlington by your people, Watty, to bring round the sledge here this morning instead of the carriage."

"You have mounted a sledge, then?" inquired Alberic Vernon, almost with interest. "Vastly spirited, certainly, considering there are not half a dozen days in an English winter to render it available! Always too much frost for hunting, seldom enough for skating—*de trop ou de trop peu, partout dans ce monde!*"

"I mounted a sledge only because I've a pretty little friend who had set her heart upon one," rejoined Colonel Hamilton, wondering why the avowal should produce so singular a smile on the lips of Alberic Vernon.

"I trust your pretty little friend will prove properly grateful," said he, with a plausible face. "You seem bent, my dear sir, on enlightening the darkness of our obtuse county. No end to the curious spectacles with which you have already favoured the neighbourhood!"

"Ah! you mean my hookahbador and the Thibet goats?" replied the colonel.

"Not exactly," was Alberic Vernon's reply; when Sir Henry Middlebury, perceiving (though by no means a miracle of discernment), from the confusion of Captain Hamlyn's countenance, that his nephew was perpetrating impertinences, with a becoming deference to Colonel Hamilton's age, calling, and income, brought up his heavy forces to the assistance of the weaker party. The baronet's minute and prolix inquiries concerning the construction of the sledge, its cost, and principles of draught, allowed time to Alberic to recover his sense of decency. On this occasion, Sir Henry's powers of prosification proved as valuable as those of a pompos Mr. Speaker in the House of Commons, who, in the midst of an uproarious debate, rises to expound some point of law, and afford breathing time to the infuriated belligerents.

Already it had glanced into Alberic Vernon's mind that, though Colonel Hamilton did not belong to White's, was not in Parliament, and neither employed a quotable tailor, nor understood a syllable of French, it was unbecoming his chivalry to insult a gray-headed man under his father's roof; and with his usual glibness of speech, and pretended interest in the subject, he accordingly began to descant upon sledges in general, torch-races in Germany, sleighing parties in America, and the brilliant *traineaux* of Moscow and the Bois de Boulogne.

"We had some charming sledge-races at Ratisbon last winter," said he, addressing Lady Middlebury, lest he should be suspected of civility to her daughter. "I remember, one night, that mad Hungarian, Prince Keglies, in pretending to cross the Danube at full gallop, turned over the *traineau* of one of the young princes of Saxony, and broke his arm."

"For mischief sake?" abruptly inquired Colonel Hamilton.

"No, for a wager. I made my whole journey through Styria last Christmas in a sledge, and flatter myself I drive one like a Laplander. But the horses are too heavy in this country for anything of the kind—a great deal too heavy."

"By George! I wish you'd try mine!" cried Colonel Hamilton, cordially, wholly unaware of the young gentleman's previous impertinence.

"There's almost time now to send over for it, if one of your lazy stable fellows could be spared."

Mr. Vernon hesitated, for the proposition really took his fancy; yet he was ashamed to accept a civility from the man they had been confederating together to keep at arm's length from the foot of their throne.

"If you choose to make the experiment this morning," continued the colonel, still and ever intent upon promoting the pleasures of other people, "you must even compromise with driving over to Dean to give Miss Hamlyn a turn; for I promised her she should have the first day's enjoyment of the Royal Lydia, which was built solely to please her, poor dear, and I wouldn't have her disappointed for a Jew's eye. However, I suppose a pretty girl's company will be no obstacle to the pleasure of the drive?"

The whole party looked aghast, Alberic at so audacious an attack upon his hand and heart, Lady Middlebury and her daughters at the immorality of such a project as a *telé-à-télé* between a young gentleman and young lady!

"My sister will easily bear the privation for a single day," cried Walter Hamlyn, in utter confusion. "Mr. Vernon has far too many agreeable companions at his disposal, my dear colonel, to render it necessary to seek one so far from home."

"But I won't hear of Lydia's being put off!" cried the colonel, stoutly. "I settled it 'tother day with the young marquis that he was to be the first to drive her, and a sad vexation 'twas to him, poor fellow, to be forced to go off at a moment's warning, before the sledge was off the stocks. The very last thing he said to me, as he stepped into his chariot, was a wish the snow might last long enough to enable me to drive it over to Dartford Hall. 'But even then, my dear lord,' said I, nudging his elbow, 'you won't have Miss Lydia along with it;' on which (between friends) he turned as red as scarlet, for he didn't suspect, poor lad, that any one had been noticing how plaguy sweet he was upon the young lady all the time he was staying at Dean Park. But he's a fine fellow, any way, Lord Dartford—a fine, hearty, manly, unaffected fellow; and, by George, I wish there were more like him in the world!"

This rambling speech, which seemed almost intended to convey reproach to the two young men present, was followed by a profound silence. Lady Vernon and her daughter seemed petrified. Regarding the Marquis of Dartford as almost a portion of their goods and chattels, they considered the mere junction of his name with that of the banker's daughter as positive profanation. Still, the man on so familiar a footing with the marquis was not altogether to be coughed down.

Already Sir Henry Middlebury was coming to their aid, in his usual laudable spirit of prosy investigation, begging to know in what particular consisted the superiority of Lord Dartford, whether he had taken his seat in Parliament, and were likely to distinguish himself in the House?

Before the question had been jealously answered by Alberic, and scoutingly by Captain Hamlyn, as inconsistent with the well-known habits of their friend, the breakfast party broke up, the carriage being announced for the departure of the visitors for Dean Park.

By a strange but not unnatural revulsion of feeling, no sooner did Lord Vernon behold Col-

CHAPTER VIII.

Colonel Hamilton in the act of taking leave, previous to quitting his house forever, than the instincts of English nature were roused for a moment in his stubborn heart, suggesting a regret that he had been tempted into ungraciousness towards any guest under his roof. Conscious that the old soldier was guiltless of intentional intrusion on his hospitality, Lord Vernon felt that, so long as the stranger remained within his gates, he was entitled to courtesy and protection. As regarded the question of their future acquaintanceship, according to the policy of the Thane of Fife,

There might have come a time for that hereafter!

These scruples of conscience were only increased by the openness of heart and hand with which Colonel Hamilton, unsuspecting as guiltless of offence, expressed at parting his cordial hopes to Lady Vernon and her daughter, that they would shortly visit him at Burlington Manor, bringing with them the Middlebury family, Sir Henry having expressed his usual painstaking curiosity concerning the complexion of raw betel-nuts, and the fleece and feeding of the Thibet goats.

At that moment Lord Vernon felt almost vexed at the repellant coldness with which his lady received these neighbourly demonstrations. Like Alexander the Great, he began to reckon it among the many miseries of his destiny that his orders were too punctiliously obeyed.

"Hey day! what, an't we to travel home together, then?" cried the colonel, addressing Walter, as they traversed the hall, escorted by Sir Henry and Alberic, who were projecting a walk to look after snipes in the neighbourhood of Braxham Mere, on perceiving that his own carriage and Walter's hack were in attendance.

"You mentioned, sir, that you were not returning to Dean, but to Burlington; and, as I have business at Ovington on my way home—"

Captain Hamlyn was beginning.

"Ay, ay, ay! I see how 'tis, I see how 'tis!" good-humouredly interrupted the colonel. "You threw over the old man, because you'd a mind to give yourself a chance of being invited to stop another day in a house containing three pretty girls, eh! instead of keeping company with a lonesome hermit through this dull evening? At your age, my boy, I should ha' done just the same! But come, Watty, drive back with me; and if you'll stay and dine, by George! Goody Johnston shall toss you up one of those famous dry mango curries I was talking about yesterday at dinner, of which not a soul in England knows the secret but herself. I promise you that one of Mrs. Johnston's prawn-curries, washed down by a glass of my old Madeira, is a thing not to be sneezed at, even by a fine gentleman of the Blues. By George! it whets an appetite that would carry you through three courses and a half of French kickshaws."

Afraid of hazarding a glance towards Alberic Vernon's impertinent face, Walter Hamlyn politely excused himself. While the colonel was assisted into his well-appointed carriage, he mounted and rode hastily from the door, secretly blessing his stars that his visit was at an end, so which, for many years past, he had been looking forward as an almost unattainable pleasure.

The best composition and temperature (for worldly success) is to have openness in fame and opinion, secrecy in habit, dissimulation in reasonable use, and a power to feign if there be no remedy.—Bacon.

THROUGH the morning was one of the brightest of winter mornings, and his hack one of the best reputed in the county, Captain Hamlyn's ride homeward was far from a pleasant one. For whatever he might have been intended by nature, Walter was, by the influence of education, more worldly and artificial than is generally supposed compatible with the warm impulses of four-and-twenty. Not "Nature," but Art, was his "godness."

Trained by his father in abject deference to the opinion of the world, the verdict of the coteries (the "world" with which he was chiefly acquainted) comprehended his Alpha and Omega. His likings and dislikings had long been regulated by fashionable favour, and a suspicion was just arising in his mind that a sentiment stronger still was about to originate under a similar influence.

From the moment of his introduction to Lucinda Vernon, at a royal ball, where he had been accounted the handsomest man, and she the best *valiseuse* in the room, he had regarded her with strong admiration—admiration not a little enhanced by the consecration of the name of Vernon to his early reverence by the worship of Dean Park. In the days of the old Lord Vernon, the inhabitants had lived on terms of intimacy, which did not prevent their mutual visitations from being gaudy days and domestic epochs in the archives of the Hamlyn tribe.

To such a slave of appearances as Walter, the grace and elegance of Miss Vernon were, in fact, a sufficient merit; and now that he had beheld her deriving new charms from the dignities of her father's house, yet accepting his attentions far more propitiously than she had ever done in town, his prepossession in her favour was complete. Young, pretty, animated, there was something in Lucinda's smile, when she *did* choose to smile, peculiarly ingratiating; and as she *had* chosen to dispense her smiles to the intimate friend of the fortunate man whose marchioness she was bent on becoming, the deluded guest had every reason to suppose himself an object of interest in her fastidious eye.

In London, Walter was a general favourite. Hamlyn of the Blues had conquests to boast of far more gratifying to dandy vanity than the preference of Lord Vernon's daughter; and it was, therefore, no exorbitant stretch of self-love to infer that, had other contingencies prospered the intention, his homage might not have proved unacceptable to the daughter of his noble neighbour.

Lucinda was precisely the worldly wife for so worldly a husband—for a man who took as much delight in appearances as others in reality. Lucinda sympathized in all his pretentious finery. Lucinda, like himself, had not an aim beyond the narrow horizon of fashionable life. With such a bride, he felt that he should be indescribably happy; no longer the humble Hamlyn of Dean Park, but son-in-law to the Right Hon. John Lord Vernon, and appurtenant to the noble family at the Hyde; no longer fated to figure by inscription in daybooks and ledgers, but included in the flattering pages of Burke, Lodge, and Debrett!

But, above all, to be beloved by that thrice-

refined being, to whom the vulgar earth seemed scarcely good enough to tread—who cultivated impertinence as an accomplishment, and pride as a virtue! It was really too flattering an unctation to be laid to any mortal soul; and Walter, as he proceeded to recall, smile by smile, and repartee by repartee, their delightful conversation of the preceding evening, suddenly uttered so deep a sigh as sent his warm breath into the frosty atmosphere like the burst of extra steam discharged from a tender.

For, alas! it occurred to him at the same moment, that, though any decided avowal of preference on the part of Miss Vernon might, in the early days of their London acquaintance, have mollified her father in favour of a gentlemanly young man, the heir to an unnumbered estate of six thousand a year, all was now frustrated by the degrading light in which he had made his *début* at Hyde, as the esquire to a foolish knight; henceforward to be inextricably connected, in the minds of the family, with the old Ostrogoth who had proposed to hang for incompetency their right honourable cousin, the Earl of Clanswaney, and addressed Lady Vernon as "my lady," after the fashion of her footmen.

"I was certain the intimacy of that blundering old blockhead boded us no good," murmured Walter, in the bitterness of his heart. "How shall I ever manage to make my father understand the irreparable injury he may do us by entailing such a nuisance on the family. Useless to appeal to my mother, I fear—utterly useless! The seclusion of her life renders her comparatively indifferent to the verdict of society; besides, the old gentleman's foolish partiality for my sisters has enlisted her as his warmest partisan. But the governor, thank Heaven, is a man of the world; and on hearing how Hamilton has been committing himself and us, may grow less fond of his company. No time to be lost in broaching the subject. After to-morrow, my father and mother start for Rotherwood Castle, and thence for town; where, once settled to business, it is impossible to abstract the governor's attention a moment from his consols and Exchequer-bills. But we shall be alone to-day, and after dinner, over our wine, I will not lose the opportunity of relating Hamilton's preposterous allusions to Dartford and Lydia, which, in the presence of Lady Vernon, positively made my blood run cold!"

On arriving at home, however, Walter saw that his father was in no mood for trifling expostulations. Rarely save in the intimate privacy of wedded life, *never* with his favourite son; did Richard Hamlyn give way to the irritations of temper; but by the saddened looks of his mother, Walter saw, the moment he entered the house, that something was amiss. He could almost have fancied, indeed, that her eyelids were swollen with weeping—a painful suspicion; for he loved his mother, if not as she deserved, as much as was compatible with the shallow selfishness of his heart. He would have prized her more highly had she been the offspring of nobility than as the daughter of a family of hereditary merchants, who entailed upon him the opprobrium of having his second name (for he was "Walter Harrington Hamlyn") engraved upon brewers' drays and warehousemen's wagons. But, as is usually the case, the parent who had never flattered his foibles was the one nearest to his heart.

"What is the matter to-day with my mother?" he inquired anxiously of Lydia, when Mrs. Hamlyn suddenly left the room in which he had found them sitting together engaged at work.

"Nothing that I am aware of," replied his sister, to whom it was no unusual occurrence to see her mother out of spirits.

"She was cheerful enough when we drove off yesterday to dinner," persisted Walter, "and now she will scarcely utter a word."

"Mamma had no opportunity to say much while you were giving us your lively account of the party at the Hyde," observed Miss Hamlyn; "but it does not strike me that she is more silent than usual. The house appears duller, of course, than when filled with company at your first arrival. You miss Lord Dartford—you miss Colonel Hamilton."

"Miss Colonel Hamilton?" exclaimed Walter, shrugging his shoulders, a suspicion glancing into his mind that, according to the old man's surmises, the departure of the marquis might at least be a source of regret to his sister. "No, no, I miss nobody. I miss only my mother's usual smile, which is certainly the sweetest in the world. Either I have offended her, or something is going wrong in the family."

"What *can* be going wrong?" cried Lydia. "My dear Walter, the change is in yourself, not in mamma. By-the-way, now I think of it, she *may* be a little out of spirits; for she was telling me, as you came in, that we should have to go to Rotherwood Castle without my father, who is obliged to return to London to-morrow."

"To-morrow? How provoking! On that eternal plea of business, I suppose. I wish the world city were utterly effaced from the language!"

"Might not the name of Hamlyn chance to disappear in its company?" replied Lydia, who, under the encouragement of Colonel Hamilton, had of late sometimes hazarded a retort upon her brother.

"Nonsense! Do you suppose that Mr. Hamlyn, of Dean Park—Mr. Hamlyn, the member of Barsthorpe, has no existence out of Lombard-street?" inquired Walter, taking up his usual station in the rocking-chair, as if for the composure of his irritation. "I wish to Heaven," he continued, pursuing his train of sinister reflections, "that I had made up my mind to proceed at once to Melton with Dartford, instead of deranging my plans with Warwickshire and Ormeau! I see how it will happen. Here shall I be, in case the frost sets in, weathered at Dean, with that insufferable old man constantly buzzing about us like a huge insect, and profiting by my father's absence to bore us eternally with his company! Yesterday, on our way to the Hyde, he had literally the coolness to invite me to dine and sleep at Burlington, to meet—guess whom?"

"The Markhams, perhaps?"

"A thousand times worse! Tom Gratwycke: a vulgar, silly, lanky boy, with whom my tiger would scarcely associate!"

"It was easy to excuse yourself."

"Not so easy as you may fancy. A man so provokingly friendly and hospitable as this worthy colonel of yours, is as hard to throw over as the Tower of Pisa. If the weather were not so detestable, I would start for Melton when you are off to Rotherwood sooner than remain here."

"Why not return to town with my father?"

"When I have just got two months' leave?"

Absurd! I had so thoroughly counted on a fortnight here, and a month at Melton with Dartford!"

"It is really most inconsiderate of Lady Dartford to fall ill during the hunting season!" cried Lydia, laughing. "But perhaps, when it becomes generally known how much you are bored here, and what an infliction you find Colonel Hamilton, Providence may send us a thaw, or better health to the marchioness."

Walter surveyed the saucy girl with some surprise; but the result of his examination was favourable to Lydia. Though sharing his father's indignation that a child of seventeen should presume to have an opinion of her own, he was startled by the discovery that, while his attention was absorbed by his London pleasures, his sister had been expanding in the school-room into a lovely and intelligent girl, to a degree that fully accounted for the imputed admiration of his friend the marquis.

"Meantime," said he; resuming the train of his reflections, "be assured that I shall not disgrace myself by again appearing before the Vernons in company with your friend the colonel, and so I mean to announce this very day to my father."

The torporific influence of a family dinner, enjoyed after the taciturn fashion of Dean Park, produced, however, some modification in Walter's heroic intentions. On the present occasion, Mr. Hamlyn not only abstained from the mention of proper names, but remained altogether silent so long as Ramsay and the footmen were in attendance. During dessert, he did not exceed monosyllables; and by the time the ladies withdrew, Walter's confidence in himself and in his influence over his father was somewhat shaken. Had he possessed a single sin unwhipped of justice, in the form of a play-debt or disgraceful affair of gallantry, he would have trembled at the idea of being left alone with "the governor!"

Scarcely, however, had Mrs. Hamlyn quitted the room, when the spirits of her husband appeared suddenly to revive. Drawing his chair nearer the fire, he rang for a fresh bottle of Claret, specifying to Ramsay a particular bin—the favourite Mouton which had been in requisition for the recent Rotherwood party.

"After all," thought Walter, "the discomfiture of my father and mother arose probably from one of those conjugal misunderstandings common to the best-regulated families. Most likely, they disagreed about my sister, whom her mother brings as much too forward as her father wants to keep too much in the background. My mind is relieved. I think I may venture to announce my visit to Melton, and throw down the gauntlet to Burlington Manor."

Nevertheless, to his own surprise, Walter, who was the only member of the family unrestrained by the habitual gravity of his father, found it for once difficult to open the conversation he meditated; not from finding him, as he expected, out of sorts, but from the vein of unusual loquacity in which Mr. Hamlyn saw fit to indulge.

No sooner did the favourite Claret arrive, than he expanded, with reckless fluency, on a thousand trivial subjects, which, in his ordinary mood, he would have scorned as unworthy mention; such as the merits of Lord Vernon's French cook, the fine proportions of Lord Dartford's figure, and the bad taste of the Etruscan library

at the Hyde. Gratwyckes, Barlows, Markhams—Ovington, Braxham, Barsthorpe—all and sundry—everything and nothing—elicited in succession some flighty remark from the habitually taciturn banker. But that Walter could have numbered the glasses swallowed by his ever sober parent, he could almost have supposed him under the influence of wine.

"As you say, old Middlebury is a mouthy, pompous, empty fellow!" said he, cheerfully addressing his son. "I remember him at college—a pains-taking ass, even then—wearing his soul out, and other people's, to ascertain, chapter and verse, the cause and effect of things that wiser people are content to take for granted. Another glass of claret, Walter! This Mouton is not to be despised. But Sir Henry is a man highly respected in his county—always in the chair at public meetings, and so forth. Lady Middlebury used to be a devilish pretty woman—far prettier than Lady Vernon. The late Lord Vernon was often heard to say that his son had been taken in by the wrong sister. The late Lord Vernon had an aversion to the whole family. Your health, Walter! your friend Lord Dartford's health. What sort of girl has the present Miss Vernon grown up? Better looking than her eight ugly aunts, I hope—as old Gratwycke used to call them, the eight foolish virgins. I have not seen Miss Vernon since she was a child."

"She is considered one of the prettiest persons in London," replied Walter, more warmly than was his wont, so contagious is the influence of good wine and good spirits. "Miss Vernon possesses an air of distinction and high-breeding, in my opinion, far superior to beauty."

"She will marry well, I dare say—though I doubt whether her father will be inclined to come down with the ready," said Hamlyn. "I think I heard Lord Crawley, the other night, quizzing his nephew about the fair lady of the Hyde."

"Dartford?" exclaimed Walter Hamlyn. "Dartford? No, no, *that* would never do," added he, with the significant smile that overspreads the face of a handsome man when naming a rival to whom he supposes himself preferred.

"Dartford is an excellent fellow; but (as you must have perceived) fond only of horses, dogs, driving, sporting, billiards—"

"In short, not a lady's man!" interrupted his father, summing up.

"Whereas Miss Vernon is refinement and elegance itself; the sort of girl whom, were it your wish I should marry, and our prospects in life were equal, I should prefer above all others for a wife."

Mr. Hamlyn, fancying, perhaps, that he had not distinctly understood the words uttered by his son, drew his chair a little closer; and, as he poured out another glass of Claret, glanced interrogatively at his face.

"I said, sir, that were I at liberty to make a choice, of all the girls of my acquaintance I would marry the daughter of Lord Vernon."

Mr. Hamlyn replied by a sudden burst of laughter, that sounded hysterical. He was a person who seldom laughed. When he did, his mirth had almost the appearance of a convulsion.

"You!" cried he; "you marry the daughter of Lord Vernon? you, Walter Hamlyn, unite yourself with a penniless fine lady? you, the son of Hamlyn of Lombard-street—of Hamlyn

the banker? Think of the tone in which that stiff-necked pharisee, Lord Vernon, would pronounce those very words, '*the son of Hamlyn the banker!*'

"I am not likely to afford him the opportunity of insulting us, sir," replied Walter, coolly. "So far from deeming it possible I could be received at the Hyde as a suitor, I never expect to enter the house again, even as a guest. After the offensive conduct of your friend Colonel Hamilton," he continued, nettled by the reiterated laughter of his father, "I shall consider Lord Vernon fully justified in cutting our acquaintance. It required all my self-command and forbearance towards every friend of yours, sir, not to tell the old fellow, when we left the Hyde this morning, how great a savage I consider him."

The merriment of Mr. Hamlyn instantly ceased. A moment before, he had been raising his glass to the light, as if in admiration of the hue and clearness of his claret. He now suddenly set down the glass.

"Better cut your tongue out, Walter Hamlyn," was his stern reply, "than let it convey offence to Colonel Hamilton!"

The banker had all the air of being as abruptly sobered as he had before been suddenly excited. Yet Captain Hamlyn, on raising his eyes, in amazement, to his father's face, fancied he could discern about the mouth spasmodic twitches of suppressed passion.

"Be assured, sir," he resumed, in a pacifying tone, "that I did not hazard so much as an ungracious syllable to the old gentleman. We parted the best friends in the world. Be under no apprehensions."

"Apprehensions! What apprehensions? and apprehensions of *what?*" repeated Mr. Hamlyn, with kindling eyes. "Of whom do you suppose I am afraid? All I desire is, that a poor old man, who has not a relation in the world—who has survived his kith and kin—his wife and children—should derive, in his declining years, such comfort as our society is able to afford him. A mere matter of Christian charity, Walter—a mere matter of Christian charity! Hamilton is very fond of *you*; he admires you, he appreciates you. You were his son's fag, I fancy, at Eton; and your very name refreshes his heart with reminiscences of his children."

"His name brings back to me reminiscences of the blacking-brush, which Jack Hamilton used to fling every morning at my head when his shoes were not ready!" cried Walter, hoping to divert the serious view his father had for a moment seemed inclined to take of the case.

"Robert Hamilton was nearer your age, I fancy?" resumed Mr. Hamlyn, with an air of abstraction.

"Robert, however, I liked even less than his brother. Bob was always a peevish, sickly fellow."

"His sickliness, my dear boy (between ourselves), may prove the origin of singular good fortune to yourself," said Mr. Hamlyn.

"To me?" reiterated Walter, with a smile.

"I have reason to know," persisted his father, lowering his voice to a still more confidential pitch, "that the widow is coming to spend the spring at Burlington Manor."

"What widow?" inquired Walter Hamlyn, beginning to fear that what he had at first mistaken for tipsiness might be in truth mental aberration.

"Robert Hamilton's widow. That beautiful Ellen Somerton, whom his father (at my instigation) did so much to prevent his marrying, and who made him so good a wife."

"Well, sir!" demanded Walter, still perplexed by his father's incoherency of manner.

"Well, sir? Why, I say that a pretty wife and a good wife, when converted into a widow, may make a good and pretty wife again. Mrs. Robert Hamilton's health, Walter! Drink it, my boy, in a bumper! Mrs. Robert Hamilton's health! till she become Mrs. Walter Hamlyn."

"What can you possibly mean, my dear father?" exclaimed Walter, now almost hoping that his father's mind *might* be disturbed.

"Mean! why, that Hamilton is about to bequeath her every guinea of his three hundred and fifty thousand pounds, that is, if she should marry to please him."

"I trust she *may*," was Walter's cold reply, "but it certainly will not be through *my* offering her my hand."

"Impossible to say, till you become acquainted with the lady," pleaded his father, still undiscouraged.

"I can both say and swear it," persisted Walter Hamlyn.

"The eloquence of three hundred and fifty thousand pounds may induce you to forswear yourself."

"Not where there exists a counterbalance of vulgarity and pretension," cried the young man, his feelings warm with claret and the recollection of Lucinda Vernon's bright eyes. "Nothing on earth—no, my dear father—I swear that *nothing on earth* would ever induce me to unite myself with a widow!"

"Nothing on earth! not even your father's entreaties, your father's danger, your father's misery, your father's ruin!" demanded the elder Hamlyn, trembling in every limb, and apparently on the verge of distraction. "Take heed of what you are saying, Walter," added he, with a glance that froze the young soldier's blood within his veins. "You know not what it is to live stretched on the rack of a responsibility such as mine. Very well for *you*; your mother, your brother, who glide through life enjoying without an effort the fruit of my labours, the fruit of my joyless days, my sleepless nights, my perilled salvation; all very well for *you*, I say, to disparage my labours, and recede from *this* sacrifice, or refuse the *other* exertion, while your father is wearing himself down to the grave by his endeavours to preserve the honour of the family."

Pausing for a moment in his impetuous volatility, Mr. Hamlyn suddenly filled his glass with wine, and swallowed it almost at a mouthful.

"But you may tax a man's faculties too far," cried he, with renewed fervour; "and beware, Walter, beware of driving me to utter distraction. I have this day cursed your brother—cursed him with a bitter and cleaving curse. I have this day raised my hand against my wife, because she ventured to defend his disobedience. Do not tempt me into farther outrages, do not bring me to farther shame. Walter, you are my eldest-born—you are my heir. I have ever loved *you* better than the rest. You hear my father's name—you will one day be my father's representative. For *you* I have toiled, for *you* I have suffered, for *you* I have *sinned*. Though

the others are conspiring to bring down my hairs with sorrow to the grave, my son, my son, let me not have to reckon you among my enemies."

Convulsive sobs burst from the bosom of Richard Hamlyn as he concluded this frantic apostrophe; and Walter, who no longer entertained a doubt of the mental infirmity of his companion, knew not whether to soothe or chide the morbid emotions of the sufferer. But, though apprehensive of augmenting the evil by any expressions of sympathy, the impulse of nature was not to be resisted; and, taking the hand of his father, he held it for some minutes in silence between his own, till warm tears gushed from the eyes of the banker.

Thus relieved, he seemed by degrees to recover some portion of tranquillity.

"Forgive me for having agitated you, my dear boy," faltered he, at length, though, in fact, it was himself alone who had given evidence of agitation. "I have this day, Walter, gone through much to disturb my mind—much to depress my courage. Your brother has grievously disappointed me. But we will talk of it another time—another time, when I am more composed. Not a word on the subject to your mother. It is unfair and bootless to entangle women in one's perplexities. They can afford no support—no counsel—and only increase the mischief by their chicken-heartedness."

"My dear father, I entreat, I implore you to explain yourself," cried Walter, becoming more and more alarmed, in proportion as his father appeared more rational. "Is there anything in which I can afford you the least comfort, the least assistance?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Hamlyn. "Did you not tell me, just now, that my utmost entreaties and three hundred and fifty thousand pounds would not determine you to marry a widow? such is the extent of your filial piety. But, as I said before, we will discuss the matter thoroughly another time."

"No! now, now! What is there to prevent it?" cried Walter Hamlyn.

"The irritation of my feelings. I cannot talk of it with patience—I cannot talk of it with reason. Your brother—your cold-blooded, selfish brother, presumes to—but no matter, no matter. When the stroke of retribution comes, it will fall on all—root and branch, sapling and tree. Lord Vernon may triumph then to his heart's content over Hamlyn, the banker." Then, suddenly ringing the bell, as if to put a decisive stop to his own rash disclosures, "let us go in to coffee, Walter, my boy," said he, "let us go in to coffee. They are expecting us—they are waiting for us. But, remember, not a syllable of all this to your mother."

This prohibition was, perhaps, as trying to Captain Hamlyn's feelings as any part of the painful scene by which it was preceded. For the first time in his life, Walter was undergoing severe mental uneasiness; because witnessing for the first time inconsistency and incoherency on the part of one whom he had hitherto regarded as utterly passionless, utterly immovable, ruthless as destiny, but steady as time. And to behold the man of stone thus passion-stricken, the man of business thus lost to all considerations of prudence, filled him with alarm.

Scarcely, however, had he been five minutes in the drawing-room, where Mrs. Hamlyn and Lydia were pursuing their customary evening avocations, when his father, undisturbed in voice

or mien, made his appearance, and joined cheerfully in conversation; exhibiting no trace of his slightly excitement after dinner, or his subsequent depression.

The cold, calm, leaden-eyed banker was himself again; and as Walter contemplated this miraculous transition, he trembled to consider how much of his father's habitual serenity might be a matter of hypocrisy—how much of his decorum an effort of self-control. It was, perhaps, only within the last half hour he had witnessed indications of the real character of Hamlyn, the banker.

CHAPTER IX.

To be loved by men, a man must appear to love them; and, for preserving the appearance, I cannot think of any means so sure as the reality.—SELDEN.

WALTER HAMLYN retired to rest that night with the fixed determination of entreating a full explanation from his father early on the morrow; but his rest having been singularly disturbed by anxieties arising from the mysterious communications of Mr. Hamlyn, intermingled with reminiscences of Miss Vernon's unusual graciousness and surmises touching the attractions of the "beautiful Ellen," his night was prolonged so far into the morning, that, when he reached the breakfast room, his father had already started for town, and the post-horses arrived to convey his mother and sister the first stage towards Rotherwood Castle.

Indignant with himself for having lost the opportunity of satisfying his misgivings, Walter resolved to address himself by letter to his father, and would probably have persisted throughout the day in his quarrel with his own ill-timed laziness, but for the consolations imparted to his feelings as a sportsman by a sudden thaw. Already the slopes of the park, half covered with snow, were assuming the sort of piebald complexion so cheering to the eye of a desponding fox-hunter; and, to crown his contentment, the Ormeau hounds were to meet the following morning at Alderham Gorse, a capital covert within three miles of Dean Park.

"Your father begged me to tell you, Walter," said Mrs. Hamlyn, embracing her son with a dejected air, as she was about to enter the carriage for her journey, "that he had half promised Colonel Hamilton you would dine with him to-day. Do, my dear son, if not very disagreeable to you! You have no reasonable excuse, for the colonel is aware that you are staying here alone."

"Pray do, dear Walter! he will be so very glad of your company," added Lydia, who was following her mother through the portico. "He really feels towards us as if we were his children. Make the old man happy, therefore, by dining at Burlington to-day."

Though averse at that moment to society of any kind—for Walter, though worldly and frivolous, had too honourable a spirit to have already shaken off the painful impressions produced by the rash and alarming communications of his father—he promised, ere the windows of the chariot were drawn up and a last signal of adieu exchanged with the travellers, to comply with their urgent request; and a joyful man was the old colonel that day, on finding that, instead of sitting down to his solitary dinner, a claim was made on his hospitality for the promised prawn-curry and Bombay Madeira.

But if Walter had indulged in momentary expectations of obtaining from *him* the explanation he was prohibited from seeking from his mother, he was speedily undeceived. Before he had been five minutes at Burlington Manor, he discovered that no interview had taken place between the colonel and his friend since their unlucky visit to the Hyde.

"Hamlyn tipped me a chit, late last night," said he, in the colonial slang to which the Hamlyns were now accustomed, "that he was forced to be off to town by daybreak this morning. Business, I suppose! a slice of the loan in the market, or some trifle of that sort; a Riga correspondent wanting patching, eh? or a soap manufactory blown up in bubbles, leaving Hamlyn and Co. in the suds! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Why, bless your soul and body! these great money-dealers sleep as uneasily in their beds as so many paupers in the Braxham Union. But, now I think on't, he mentioned something of an extraordinary ballot at the Indy House for the election of your uncle, Andrew Harrington."

Captain Hamlyn, aware that no terms of cordiality subsisted between his father and uncle, saw at once that this announcement was a mere pretext for his abrupt departure.

"And did my father say nothing *farther*?" said he, with assumed unconcern.

"Only that, as you and I were left solitary sparrows, we'd better perch to-day on the same branch; that maybe you'd dine with me, in compassion to my lonesomeness. And, by George! I was monously kindly thought of; for, with nothing better in prospect than a *lêlé-à-lêlé* with Pincher, I was beginning to repent I'd shirked the Rotherood party. Though I'm not fond of great lords or gaudy days (and the Hyde's been an additional sickener on that score), I'm still less fond of being alone."

"But you are not to be alone *long*, I understand," observed Walter, half desirous, half afraid to hazard a direct reference to the "beautiful Ellen." "My father tells me, sir, that your daughter-in-law is likely to become your inmate?"

"Ay, so she writes me word," replied the old man, in anything but a tone of exultation. "On my poor boy's death, I wrote from Indy, doubling her jointure, as I had *then* no home to offer her, or next to none; and feeling she might entertain a grudge against the family, which had shown itself, in the first instance, so loth to receive her. But I told her, poor thing, at the same time, that if ever old John Hamilton *had* an English roof over his head, there was bed and board, and a hearty welcome for her, when she'd a mind to try 'em. No occasion for her, just then, to make up her mind, for her own health was delicate with nursing *him*; and so she'd the wisdom to abide her two years' widowhood in Italy (where she'd seen him drop into the grave!), and there's luckily been time for all unpleasant feelings to subside between us afore our meeting."

"You expect her shortly, then?"

"As soon as maybe, I fancy. I suspect your good mother's friend, Lady Burlington (with whom she made acquaintance last summer, was a twelvemonth at Lucca), has been firing up her fancy with fine descriptions of the beauties of the Manor, for this visit to England is quite a sudden resolution."

"A very fortunate one for you, sir," said Walter, courteously. "Since you have made up your mind to spend the spring in the country,

Mrs. Robert Hamilton's society will enable you to dispense with that of my mother and sister, on their departure for Cavendish Square for the season."

"How the deuce do you know that? How do I know it *myself*? It doesn't follow that this daughter-in-law of mine is qualified to reconcile me to the loss of Lydia's pretty prattle, and Mrs. Hamlyn's sound sense and pleasant company. I know she is handsome, for I've her miniature yonder in the bureau (a present from Bob to his poor mother); and her influence over my boy, which carried 'em through all the difficulties we threw in the way of their marriage, proves that she's clever. But I mayn't like her for all that. One seldom *does* like people by whom one's aware of having dealt unkindly! One behaves all the handsomer to 'em, by way of atonement, but there's never a cordial liking. And so, you see, if poor Ellen don't happen to take my fancy, her visit here will be more a punishment than a pleasure. However, no need to go in search of misfortunes. Time enough to take offence when offence is given."

All this was strangely different from Mr. Hamlyn's account of the colonel's disposition towards his daughter-in-law. But the old gentleman's projects might, perhaps, have undergone some modification in consequence of his recent observations on men and manners at the Hyde.

Meanwhile, Walter had no cause to repent his concession. Though disappointed in the main object of his visit, the dinner was excellent, the colonel chatty and social, and the embarrassing, taciturn meal at Dean Park the preceding day was still too fresh in his recollection not to impart a charm to the plain-spoken frankness of his host. His father's dispiriting and unnatural reserve placed strongly in relief the warm, cordial nature of the good old colonel, whose heart was open to God and man simply because it contained nothing demanding concealment.

He saw that, though the abrupt truisms of Hamilton might be out of place in such stilted society as that of the Hyde, in the every-day intercourse of life he was worth a whole wilderness of Vernons. No hidden motives—no coquetting with his power—no crooked policy in the old soldier! Though fully aware of the importance of the Hamlyns to his declining years, he made no secret of his sense of dependance on their society, but welcomed Walter to his house with the overflowing glee of one who cannot do too much to prove his consciousness of obligation.

"I've had that mealy-mouthed coxcomb, young Vernon, here this morning," said the colonel, after thanking Walter heartily, at the close of dinner, for having bored himself with such a *lêlé-à-lêlé*. "I can't abide that young fellow! There's nothing *real* about him—nothing *true*. I remember at Ghazerpore a native, who saw his black face for the first time in my looking-glass, insisting upon taking it down from the wall to search for the substantial figure behind the image. Now, when I am talking to Master Alberic, I feel as if I should like to hoist out the *real* man instead of the *pretence* afore me!"

"Did you expect him here to-day?" inquired Walter, not a little mortified that Vernon should have found his way to Burlington Manor without so much as leaving a card at Dean Park; an omission which he attributed, on second

thoughts, to Colonel Hamilton's indiscreet pleasantries concerning his sister Lydia.

"I invited 'em all, if you remember." He came with their apologies, and a pretence of examining the sledge; and had the grace to say that, for a Brummagem build, 'twas by no means a bad turn-out. So I promised him, if there comes more snow while Lydia's away, to send it over for the ladies at the Hyde."

"You told him, then, that my mother and sister were gone to Rotherwood?" said Walter, his ruffled plumes smoothed by the hope that the acknowledged absence of the family had been the origin of the slight.

"He knew it, he knew it; for the very first question he asked was, whether 'my friend, the Marquis of Darford, was to be of the Rotherwood party?' Now that's just one of the fellow's saucy unrealities. He knew Darford was *not* to be of the party, inasmuch as he's attending his sick mother in another county. But he chose to hint a make-believe of Mrs. Hamlyn and Lydia's posting off after a young nobleman with forty thousand a year, and said as much as that he wished they might get it, only in quality terms. On which I gave him to understand there was no need of any such waste of turnpike-tickets, for that I'd never seen a young gentleman more spoony, more loth to leave a place, or more anxious to get back again, than my Lord Darford to Dean Park."

"I am sorry you alluded to the subject at all," said Walter; "for the Vernons, and even others less worldly, would consider it the height of presumption on our part, sir, to conjecture the possibility of such a preference, which, to do my mother and sister justice, never a moment entered their heads."

"And why not, pray? And what right have the Vernons, or e'er a body else, to call it presumption? Lydia's as pretty and pretty-behaved a girl as any in the British dominions, let 't'other be whom she may!"

"But the disproportion of rank and fortune—"

"What's fortune to a young fellow with forty thousand a year? What's rank to a marquis, who may make any Joan a lady? If Lord Darford can't marry to please himself, *who* can, I should like to know?"

"He will probably please himself and his family at the same time, some day or other, by choosing a wife in his own order of society."

"Nonsense, nonsense! Do you pretend to arrange men and women in classes, on the Linnean system, like plants and insects? Do you want to make society a kitchen-garden, all the spinach in one bed, and all the endive in 't'other? Lydia *does* belong to his order of society. They are both young folks of cultivated minds and refined manners; though in both respects, betwixt ourselves, our little girl has a plaguy deal the advantage!"

"Yours is a very philosophical view of the case," replied Walter, wishing it had proceeded from the lips of Lord Vernon rather than of the colonel, "but, I fear it will not stand against the battle-array of public opinion. The Rotherwoods, for instance, are worthy, unassuming people, and on friendly terms with my family; but rely upon it, Lady Rotherwood would be indignant at the idea of a marriage between her nephew and my sister."

"More shame for *her*, then, to have sat by simpering as she did, while the marquis was recommending himself to dear Lydia with all his

might and main. Why, what the dense is there *against* the match? That the girl's a banker's daughter? What then! If she was a banker's heiress, with fifty thousand a year to her fortune, we should have all the dukes in the land running after her, and folks would praise their prudence. My dear Watty! the day's past when noblemen thought it a fine thing to sacrifice their own and their children's happiness to the glory of having a titled name inscribed on a sham apple, in the family-tree hung up in their hall (to my thinking, as bitter an apple as the one that tempted Mother Eve to sin!). Life isn't long enough for such empty pouter. The March of Intellect has left such rubbish behind it, among other useless baggage. You might as well pretend to believe in witchcraft or the philosopher's stone, as in the right divine of lords and ladies."

"You need not reprove my credulity," said Walter, with a smile. "On the contrary, it is my interest to hope you may gain proselytes to your doctrines wherever you see fit to play the apostle; but, depend on it, pride of birth was never more influential in England than at this moment. All our institutions have an aristocratic tendency. The increasing fusion or confusion of classes necessitates a sort of fanaticism in the order whose privileges are invaded, just as religious persecutions beget religious enthusiasm."

"Mighty plausible and famously well-worded," said the colonel. "'Twouldn't read amiss in a quarterly review, from which, maybe, you cribbed it, eh, Master Watty? But 'tisn't sound, 'tisn't sound, my boy! 'Tis as hollow as a bubble. You know, as well as I do, that the most stiff-necked of these aristocrats would marry his son or daughter, at any time, to mine or your father's, on a sufficient amount of temptation; and then, what becomes of their principles? Never was there a great heiress in England, be she whom she might, that all the lords in the kingdom didn't run after, to say nothing now and then of princes of the blood!"

"I believe you are right. But, though facts may justify your assertion, you will never persuade the world, sir, that the daughter of Mr. Hamlyn, of Lombard-street, with five thousand pounds, is a suitable wife for the Marquis of Dartford."

"If he's persuaded of it, let the world go and be—hanged. As to the five thousand pounds fortune, my dear boy—but of that hereafter. I tell you what, Walter, I'm sick of seeing so much of the happiness of God's creatures sacrificed to big words. 'THE WORLD!' What on earth does the wedlock of two young folks, of independent circumstances and irreproachable conduct, matter to 'the world,' which, after all, is like the wind, more talked of than seen, except by the pigs. In the first place, what is the world? A few court cards, with finer faces than the rest of the pack, eh? A few fine gentlemen, who've jockeyed each other out of the right of deciding who's fit company to eat his dinner, or play his rubber, in certain houses in St. James's-street? and a few fine ladies, whom the said fine gentlemen consider worth touching their hats to? That's the long and short o' the world, Watty, according to *your* vocabulary. And what's more, there's many a first-rate professional man, ay, and many a first-rate Parliament man, whose opinion or company you wouldn't give a whiff o' your cigar for, only 'cause they don't exactly belong to what such

hitmice as you and young Vernon—and your elders and betters too—think proper to call the world!"

Walter Hamlyn, who, during this harangue, had been enjoying a cigar and a glass of whiskey-toddy such as the steps of Crockford's never afforded to their amateurs, secretly congratulated himself that these Hottentotisms of the worthy old gentleman had not startled the ears polite of the Hyde, instead of producing in his own a gentle titillation, forming an agreeable counteraction to the soothing fumes of his fragrant Havana.

"I dare say you are very right, sir!" said he, throwing the stump into the fire, and taking from the silver salver by his side a steaming goblet, a few concluding sips from which completed the unusual expansion of his feelings. "It is a field I have often fought over with my brother Harry, and been invariably defeated. Harry pretends that those who live out of society (such as himself, as a scholar, or you as a hermit) are in the position of aeronauts looking down upon the earth and beholding all things on the same level—the mountain and the molehill, the city and the village."

"And a plaguy good notion too! That was Harry's idea, was it! I suspect he and I should hit it off famously."

"Harry is an original, as I heard my sister telling you the other day."

"Why, I hope you don't call yourself a copy? Lydia was saying, if you remember, that no people on earth could differ more than her two brothers!"

"According to Harry's doctrines, the difference arises from the pressure of the atmosphere we live in, as the weight of objects differs in or out of the receiver of an airpump. So strong, however, is the influence of our second nature, that I admit, few people would take us for brothers. Harry is quite a bookworm."

"And you a silkworm, eh? Well, I can't approve his taste in that particular. Reading's a famous thing when talking's not to be had. Books are good company enough where there are no men and women. At Ghazerafore, for instance, a new magazine or amusing tour was manna in the desert. But, thanks to the Bond-street booksellers, yonder table's covered with 'em, and 'twould be a long time afore I thought of cutting open the leaves, so long as I'd your pleasant company at hand, or the choice of dropping in to a rubber at Dean Park. By-the-way, I suppose we shall be having your brother at home here shortly? He'll be of age, won't he, next month?"

"Next month? February? Yes, I believe so. But coming of age is an expression seldom used in a family, unless for an eldest son. Harry will certainly be one-and-twenty on the 19th of February."

"And in another month or so, I think Lydia told me, he's to take his degree?"

"You may rely on Lydia's information on any point regarding her brother. They are nearer of an age, and nursery friends. I have lived less with my sisters, and Harry is decidedly the favourite."

"'Tis but fair the poor lad should be a favourite with somebody or another!" observed the colonel; "for, between you and me and the fire, Watty, you have it all your own way with your father."

"I should have thought you had now seen

enough of the family, sir," replied Walter, "to be aware that no one has a grain of influence with my father! In his own quiet way, he is the most arbitrary man on the face of the earth."

"A pretty thing for you to say, my young spark, when you chose to be a soldier (more's the credit to you) in spite of his teeth! 'Tis my notion that all eldest sons are born with the bump of contradictiousness. There was my poor boy. He, too, chose—but no matter! However, from something your mother hinted to me t'other night (as a reason for begging me not to mention Harry's name just now afore his father), I suspect my friend Hamlyn's found cause to regret he did not pop him into the banking-house three years ago, instead of sending him Greek-mongering to college."

"Has Harry been getting into scrapes, then, at Cambridge?" eagerly inquired Walter, sitting down again, though he had just risen to depart. "Very unfair of him not to apply to me! Very unfair of him—very unkind."

"Maybe he might, if they were money-scrapes!" replied the colonel, forgiving young Hamlyn his French essences and varnished boots in favour of his prompt brotherly affection. "But I'm afraid he's likely to cross his father's purposes, just as his brother did afore him. Neither of my friend the banker's sons seem to inherit much taste for the shop; one, 'cause he's a fine gentleman—t'other, 'cause he's a whimsical gentleman. The proverb doesn't always hold good, that 'As crows the old cock, so crows the cockerel.'"

"Do you mean to say, sir," demanded Walter, in great surprise, "that Harry rebels against going into the bank?"

"Something of that kind, I fancy?"

"Why, he must be out of his senses!"

"Were you mad, pray, when you raised the same objection?"

"I sometimes think so!" replied Walter, good-humouredly. "But, though my father compromised with the insanity of his elder son, I fear he has not a sufficient stock of patience for two. Consider what a loss to the family, should anything happen to my father, if none of us succeed him in the business."

"I suppose that's what he pleaded to you, eh! and has now got to plead to Rebel the Second? Mrs. Hamlyn, I can tell you, is miserable about the matter, and wanted me to use my influence in softening her husband. But, faith, I'm far more disposed to try my hand at melting the obstinacy of the delinquent. On this occasion, Hamlyn has all the reason on his side."

"To be sure he has! What a provision for Harry to reject! Such a standing as my father's! Such a position as that of an eminent London banker."

"Then why scout it yourself, Mister Jes-samy?"

"Harry and I are differently situated. His alternative was an appointment in India."

"Was and is are two things! Harry Hamlyn, they tell me, has distinguished himself prodigiously at the University. The learned professions are open to him. Public life's open to him."

"So it will be if he fulfil my father's intentions. The great object of my brother's going to Cambridge was to qualify him for the House of Commons (for which I have not the smallest vocation), so that, one day or other, my father may resign him his seat for Barsthorpe."

"Pending which, he's to wear away the best of his days in Lombard-street, trying to prove to the money-changers that two and two make five, with a quill behind his ear, and the price of stocks always ringing in it. See what such a life has done for Hamlyn! Shrivelled him into a mummy! Why, at eight-and-forty, your father's an older man, at heart, than I at sixty-seven, after grilling away my constitution between the tropics. However, for all that, I don't wish to back up your brother! I only mean to say, as his mother did to me, that there are excuses to be made for the lad; that at his age, a fellow of spirit thinks twice afore chaining himself to the oar; and that, over a mind like his, one has a better chance by the influence of argument, than by throwing his dependance in his teeth and seeing who can talk loudest. But mind, Master Watty! All this is as confidential as a governor-general's despatch. So don't go and let the cat out of the bag, and get me called over the coals for blabbing."

"It is a poor compliment to my head and heart," said Walter (bitterly enough for a dandy), "that I am the last person to be made acquainted with the troubles of my family!"

"Such very fine gentlemen as you are sometimes supposed to care less what is passing in their families than elsewhere," cried the old colonel, who took as much pleasure in putting him on his mettle as is found by many in setting up the bristles of a handsome terrier. "However, if for half a second I fancied you one of the hollow hearts, Watty, my boy! I ask your pardon! I see I didn't do you justice."

"I was resenting the injustice of my mother and brother, sir, rather than yours," replied Walter, coldly.

"And can't you see that they might feel a delicacy about involving you in a question of filial rebellion? Harry could hardly complain of his fortunes to you—his expensive, pampered, elder brother—without running the risk of giving you pain."

"Better keep his scruples for the pain he is likely to give my father," cried Walter, piqued almost out of his generous feelings towards his brother. "However, since no one thinks me worth consulting, I may spare myself the trouble of giving an opinion. Good-night, Colonel Hamilton! I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, as the bounds meet at half past ten, and we have a heavy country before us."

"Not see me? No such thing!" cried the old man. "The meet's at Ald'rham Gorse, and I mean to drive over to covert. Though my sporting days are over, I don't see why I shouldn't give myself the treat of looking at a neat turnout, when the thing's within distance. I'll call for you in the barouche, and your horses can meet you at Ald'rham. But I won't keep you now, my dear Walter, as you've got sportsman's hours upon your hands. So good-night, and pleasant dreams t'ye!"

It is generally admitted that a covert side is one of the most sociable gathering-places of a sporting county—the fountain-head of its feuds and reconciliations, its politics and scandal. All men "qualified to bear arms" hasten thither, as if in proof of their mettle; and even the veteran sportsmen of the neighbourhood, long retired from the active pleasures of the field, make it a point to repair to the "coffee-room" whenever a meet takes place within reasonable distance.

Few country spectacles more exciting, in short, than the rendezvous of a favourite pack; to which, on all sides, equipages of every sort are repairing in full animation, from the family-coach of the squire to the knowing dog-cart of the trainer. Natty grooms, leading their master's horses, but jealously watching the condition of the grooms and horses of other masters; the sportsmen themselves, arriving singly, doubly, or in groups, on their road-hacks—in their mouths a cigar, or a reprimand for the luckless lad who is sure to be too late or too early, or have heated their hunters in zeal to prove over-punctual; and, finally, the weather-beaten, shrewd-faced old huntsman and whipper-in—part and parcel of their well-known steeds—centaurs, whose man-moiety is encased in scarlet and black velvet—followed by, or following, the pack of eager, high-couraged hounds, who move together, vivacious and compact, as though a quarter of an acre of snow were suddenly endued with life and muscularity—all conspire to impart to the winter landscape a degree of vigour and vitality such as, amid the more vivid impulses of summer, a race-course alone avails to call into action.

All the world, animate or inanimate, is in towering spirits. Care is forgotten, business laid aside. The statesman renounces his politics, the country doctor neglects his patients, the bridegroom

Forgets the bride

Was made his wedded wife yesterday:

the farmer defies his wife's prohibitions, and the farmer's son the farmer's, the moment the hounds are heard or seen making their way towards the spot where from two to four hundred healthy, happy individuals are met together for the annihilation of a monster two feet long, whose direct offence against the community consists in robbing a henroost!

It was the first time in his life Colonel Hamilton had witnessed this cheering spectacle, and his eager spirits readily took fire as he drove towards Alderham Gorse, encountering at every turn of the road some neighbour whose scarlet coat and snow-white leathers gave him the appearance of a stranger; or some stranger, whose clever turn-out rendered him an object of interest and curiosity. Having persuaded Walter to bear him company in the barouche, the young sportsman found himself every moment compelled to take his cigar from his mouth, in order to satisfy the inquisitiveness of his companion.

"Who the deuce is that crossing the turnip-field?" cried the colonel. "Why, by George! 'tis old Barlew himself, looking as fresh as a four-yr old, and all the more consequential to-day that the meet's on his own ground. I didn't know Barlew was a sportsman: yet his hunting-coat seems to have seen service. And who have we here, that the farmers and grooms are uncapping to as though 'twas the governor-general, in a bit of pink that looks as if turned out by a milliner rather than the tailor, and a strawberry and cream complexion to match? Ugh! I thought so; I knew't could be no other than the young jackanapes from the Hyde."

Walter Hamlyn felt almost ashamed of the impulse which prompted him, at that moment, to look out eagerly on the opposite side (at a restiff colt which was doing its best to unseat one of the Alderham farmers, who had a mind to show off his stock in the field, and unite business with pleasure), as a pretext for not bowing to Alberic Vernon, while thus familiarly accom-

paying, in his own carriage, the man so outrageously contemned at the Hyde. But there was no fear of his guileless companion misdoubting his pitiful motives. The colonel was engrossed, both heart and soul, both eye and ear, by the stirring scene before him.

"By George! what a splendid creature," cried he; "that bay, I mean, from which the helper has just shifted the saddle-cloth. Why, 'tis a picture for an artist! Worth three hundred guineas if it's worth a pound! Whose is it, I wonder?"

"This is only the third time I have been out this winter," replied Walter, "and I scarcely know a horse in the field. Lord Cossington is usually the best-mounted of the Ormeau party; but he would have had one of the hunt-grooms in attendance. The bay probably belongs to a stranger. There are always fellows over from Leamington, who make a grand show and prodigious noise. We are pretty sure to have some wonderful turn-outs from Leamington."

The stir and bustle were now every moment increasing, till they reached the outskirts of the gorse, whose dingy verdure looked almost as gay in the midst of winter nakedness as its golden blossoms rendered the spot at midsummer amid surrounding verdure. Many a manly, weather-beaten face was turned benevolently towards Colonel Hamilton, as they drove through a jolly group of fustian-suited but famously-mounted sportsmen, the farmers of the neighbourhood; and Walter was almost piqued to perceive that, among *them*, as well as among the country gentlemen, his companion, though so new a comer into the county, was better recognised than his father's son, the hereditary squire of Dean Park. There was something peculiarly cordial in their mode of touching their hats to the old soldier, with whose manly calling and liberality as a lord of the manor they experienced more sympathy than was compatible with the demure, cautious, and sedentary nature of the banker; whom, though affecting the Warwickshire squire, they could never prevail on themselves to regard otherwise than as Hamlyn of Lombard-street.

A thousand friendly greetings and uproarious "how are ye's" were exchanged between the colonel and the lesser squirearchy of Braxham and Ovington, of whose existence, after the fashion of the Hyde, the Hamlyns affected to have no cognizance, till Walter found himself so much embarrassed by their familiarity with his companion, that he was right glad to descey his groom and hunter leisurely walking towards the appointed spot.

In a moment he was out of the carriage, which the colonel, in compliance with the advice of his jocose friend, had caused to be drawn up on a rising ground, commanding a view of the covert and of the vale of Alderham, which the fox, when found, was most likely to take.

"What a thousand pities your mother and sister were forced to go to Rotherwood!" exclaimed the colonel, in the utmost glee and excitement, as Walter turned, on the carriage-step, to give him a parting nod. "Lydia would have enjoyed all this. By George! it almost tempts me to call out, like the man in the play, for 'a horse—a horse!' I shouldn't be surprised, afore the season's over, to find myself in the saddle, among the best of ye, galloping like the tailor to Brentford, or John Gilpin to Ware."

At that moment Walter Hamlyn sincerely

wished the noisy old man, whether mounted or on foot, anywhere but where he was; for a carriage with the Vernon liveries was fast approaching; and sooner than be found in company with the obnoxious arraigner of the Earl of Clansawney, the Bayard of the Blues resolved to flee before the face of the lady of his knightly thoughts.

By the time the blooming cheeks of Susan Middlebury and her cousin were perceptible from the carriage window, screening their eyes with their hands from the trying glare of the winter sunshine as they gazed with eager curiosity upon the motley group, Walter was apparently absorbed in a highly-interesting discussion with his groom, touching the stirrup-leathers of his hunting-saddle.

"Good-morning, Colonel Hamilton—a charming day for the field! I think I may venture to point out the scene before us to your admiration, as one of the most national and characteristic in Great Britain," shouted Sir Henry Middlebury, who was enacting the part of chaperon to his daughters and niece. And while the courteous old soldier attempted to mingle with his interjectional replies to the mouthy baronet a succession of salutations to his lovely companions, Walter Hamlyn stood obstinately afar off, resolved on no account to be confounded by the fair Lucinda with his homely friend.

At that moment a general buzz and murmur announced an occurrence of some importance—some luckless sportsman unhorsed, or some presuming bumpkin chastised. Equestrians rose in their stirrups, and pedestrians on their tip-toes, while the inmates of the half dozen carriages on the ground peered out with an air of interest. "The duke! the duke!" was instantly passed like a watchword from lip to lip, as a gentlemanly, middle-aged man, mounted on a horse (whose value was equal to that of a moderate farm), rode hat in hand through the knot of sportsmen assembled at the lower extremity of the covert, accommodating the pace of his noble steed to the amble of a crop-eared, strange-looking, old shooting-pony, bestrode by the scarecrow figure of old Gratwycke of Gratwycke, who rode beside his Grace of Elvaston with the air of something between an earth-stopper and the clown's assumption of a cockney sportsman in a Christmas pantomime; for the duke entertained the highest respect for Mr. Gratwycke of Gratwycke: first, as the head of the most ancient family in the county; next, as the staunchest preserver of its foxes; and, thirdly, as the most active and conscientious seconder of the politics of the house of Ormeau. Finer gentlemen were at all times disregarded by the Elvastons, to make way for a Gratwycke of Gratwycke.

"What on earth brings old Grat and his pony out to-day?" muttered Mr. Barlow of Alderham.

"What under heaven keeps the duke mauling yonder with Gratwycke, when Bowie is putting the hounds into the covert?" exclaimed in his turn Alberic Vernon, as the great man of the moment pushed his way side by side with the queer-looking old gentleman straight towards the carriage of Colonel Hamilton, within a few yards of which stood young Vernon, admirably mounted, and, in spite of his horror of the duchess's Irish nieces, greatly in hopes of catching the eye of the duke, and obtaining an invitation to Ormeau.

But the "Frenchified prig" was precisely the sort of youth to move, at the utmost, an indulgent smile on the countenance of the noble sportsman. Passing with a slight bow of recognition the unpromising son of one of his least estimable neighbours, his grace fulfilled his preconcerted purpose of soliciting an introduction from old Gratwycke to his friend the new lessee of Burlington Manor. Though Ormeau was situated in another county, whereof it formed the leading influence, the habits and character of Colonel Hamilton were fully understood and appreciated by the Duke of Elvaston, who admired his liberal politics and active benevolence, as much as he despised the narrowness of mind of the ennobled rather than noble lord of the Hyde, who was known to have driven a Smithfield bargain with his vote and conscience as a peer of the realm.

By this spontaneous mark of respect on the part of a man so universally beloved as the Duke of Elvaston, the old colonel was inexpressibly gratified, and he sat leaning with a brightened countenance from the carriage to receive the thanks of the duke for his attention to the only covert on the Burlington estate, and a hearty invitation to him to improve their acquaintance at Ormeau the first opportunity.

"If you will come and see me," said his grace, cordially, "I will show you the height we consider the right thing for thorns in the coverts on my side the county. The late Sir Roger Burlington being at variance with me on political and other matters, always decided that we lived out of visiting distance; which is so far true, that a range of fourteen miles is convenient or inconvenient, according to the liking of the parties. I shall sincerely rejoice if Colonel Hamilton will permit me to account him among my near neighbours."

And as he courteously raised his hat while receiving the worthy colonel's equally frank reply, and then rode on towards the huntsman, leaving old Gratwycke to potter with his friend, not a man in the field but experienced a certain accession of deference towards the stranger whom the duke they so dearly valued delighted to honour.

But of all present, Walter Hamlyn was the one on whom his grace's attentions produced the strongest impression. At one moment, mortified to see civilities volunteered by the noble owner of Ormeau to a perfect stranger in the county, in which his father, an established landed proprietor, had never obtained from him more than a distant bow—he was inclined to rejoice, the next, at a mark of distinction which he was certain had equally astonished and vexed the supercilious heir-apparent of the Hyde.

"It is all the result of that malicious old Gratwycke's representations," was Walter's first reflection. "This will teach the Vernons to think twice before they insult a friend of my father's!" was his second. And while accusing the Middleburys of meanness for the pains they were already taking to enter into conversation with the colonel, he forgot to blush for the still baser inconsistency which had prompted him to shrink from the side of his good old friend, in the dread of exposing himself to the quizzing of more fashionable associates.

During the silence that now superseded the boisterous gossip of the groups of sportsmen, while the hounds were pushing their way into

the prickly covert, Walter was musing in most unsportsmanlike guise upon the singular popularity of Colonel Hamilton.

"'Tis altogether unaccountable," murmured he. "Ordinary in appearance—unpolished (not to say vulgar) in manners—moderate in abilities, uncultivated, illiterate—neither a sportsman, nor an agriculturist, nor a politician—he comes hither, an utter stranger, and instantly makes the conquest of every family of rank or eminence in the neighbourhood! The Duke of Elvaston rarely troubles himself to be civil to any but foxhunters; Lord Rotherwood cares only for farmers; Lord Crawley for Tories; Dartford for his brother officers! Yet one and all have singled out Colonel Hamilton for a favourite! Just as my mother and Lydia are ready to fetch and carry for him, like a brace of spaniels, do four of the most marked men in England put themselves out of their way to beset him with attentions! What is the meaning of this? To them his fortune is nothing! It must be the genuine cordiality of the old man's nature which begets cordiality in return! One might almost fancy that some malignant counter-charm had arisen from my father's desire to keep him on terms of exclusive intimacy with our family, which serves to attract towards him the officious attentions of the whole world!"

CHAPTER X.

Still harping on my daughter!

SHAKESPEARE

"I must say, my dear Walter," observed Colonel Hamilton, when they met the following day at dinner, at the humble but cheerful board of Ovington Vicarage, "that your good father's promises concerning a winter in Warwickshire were quite on the safe side o' things! Why, in proposing to me the tenancy of his ward's seat of Burlington Manor, Hamlyn expressly said it had little to offer in the way of society beyond his own fireside, which was open to me at all times; and our good friends, the present company, who he promised me would be charitable enough to put up with the intrusions of a troublesome old fellow, likely to beat the doctor at backgammon, and be less grateful than he ought for the prescriptions of the doctor's good lady. He told me frankly I might whistle for the civilities of the Hyde; while Ormeau, being in another county, might as well be in another kingdom. Well, sir! I wasn't daunted. I signed, sealed, and delivered, in spite of all he said to prove I was going to be as lonesome at Burlington as Robinson Crusoe, with only himself for my man Friday."

"We have all the more to thank you, my dear sir," said Dr. Markham, cheerfully, "for your confidence in our good-will to make you happy among us."

"But just admire, doctor, how much better my friend Hamlyn has been than his word. See how he's managed matters for me! Invitations to Rotherood Castle, to Darford Hall, to Lord Vernon's, to the Duke of Elvaston's—twice as many, in short, as I care to accept. This is acting the part of a friend by one. However, I can do very well without these lords and ladies. What with Dean Park, and my friends here and at Gratwycke, I needn't spend an evening a week at home more than I please."

At this undeserved compliment, Walter Hamlyn felt the colour rise to his temples. No one knew better than the Markhams Mr. Hamlyn's utter inability to work the miracles imputed to him. The doctor was, however, sufficiently considerate towards his embarrassment to devote himself assiduously at that moment to the study of the glass, predicting rain from a trifling rise, while Captain Hamlyn, aware of the importance attached by his father to his influence over the nabob, dared not hazard more than a slight disclaimer.

"My father has every disposition, sir," said he, "to secure you all these accessions, and more, to your comfort at Burlington. But the will is not always the power."

"Isn't for my own share I care about the matter?" cried the colonel. "As far as I'm concerned, I vow to my Maker that Dean Park and Ovington Vicarage comprise all I ever wish to see of society. The Hyde is about as cheerful as a model-penitentiary or family vault; and though the Rotheroods are excellent folks, I've seen faster coaches in my time. But I'm mighty glad to have secured a little change for poor Ellen! After living abroad, she'll find the Manor as dull, maybe, as I find Lord Vernon's state-prison. But now, if she wants younger faces than mine and my friend Hamlyn's, at Rotherood she'll have a sight of the young marquise, and at Ormeau of the young marquise multiplied by ten. If among 'em all she find nothing to suit her, the devil's in't!"

Walter Hamlyn felt surprised, almost indignant, at the idea of this exposure of the "beautiful Ellen," who had been all but offered to himself, the presumptive heiress of three hundred and fifty thousand pounds in ready money, to the coveting of the *roué* sportsmen somewhat freely mingled with the stately circle of Ormeau. But it was not for *him* to remonstrate.

"Any news to-day from the travellers?" inquired Dr. Markham of Walter, though of opinion that Mrs. Hamlyn was more likely to have addressed her communications to her Burlington neighbour than to her dandy son.

"None," replied Walter; "but with such roads, such carriages, and such weather, the journey was not very alarming."

"There might have come ill news short of a break-down, however," replied the colonel, vexed at his listlessness. "My good friend, Mrs. Hamlyn, was but so-so in spirits when she left home."

"My mother wanted change of air and scene. She leads too sedentary a life."

"A life of duty and diligence," said the vicar. "Her candle goeth not out by night. Like the wise matron of Solomon's time, 'she maketh herself coverings of tapestry, and layeth her hand to the spindle.'"

"I hope for a letter from Rotherwood to-morrow," observed Walter, who always fancied, when people quoted Scripture in his presence, that they were talking at him. "I am most anxious to know about Lady Dartford, on the state of whose health depends whether Dar is likely to meet me at Melton next week."

"Next week? Why you're surely not going to start *next week*?" cried the colonel. "Shan't you wait till Madam Hamlyn and Lydia come back? Shan't you be here to make acquaintance with Ellen?"

"I think of returning to Dean Park, sir, a few weeks hence. This is the best part of the season for Melton. All my friends are there just now."

"By George! that puts me deucedly out in my plans," cried Colonel Hamilton, unreservedly. "I was going to ask a favour of you, Master Watty. I've a monstrous mind to have a peep at one of your fine universities, and thought of giving myself a scamper over to Cambridge, and asking you to be my dragoman."

"Had it been in my power to accompany you, my dear sir, I should, of course, have pleaded for Oxford," replied Captain Hamlyn. "Bound to be faithful to Alma Mater, are we not, Dr. Markham? I, you know, am a Christ Church man."

"And little the better for it, I'm afraid, eh, Master Watty? But I want to see a thing or two at Cambridge besides King's College Chapel. I want to see Henry Hamlyn—I want to have a talk with your brother."

"In that case, sir, you are infinitely better without me," replied Walter, dreading a more distinct allusion, in presence of the Markhams, to the critical state of his family, and still smarting under the want of confidence of his brother. "It would take me a hundred miles out of my way to attempt Cambridge on my road from Ovington to Melton Mowbray."

"Ay, ay? Well, I've made a circumbendibus of a thousand miles in Indy, afore now, to serve a friend; and, to my thinking, a brother's the friend given us by Gon. However, I won't insist upon a plan that seems to derange your fox-hunting. I dare say Johnston and I can manage to settle with the postboys, and find out the road to Trinity College by following our own long noses."

"I was thinking—" said Mrs. Markham, as if about to unfold some serious project, then suddenly stopping short, under the influence of the awe which habitually prevented her from expounding her thoughts except to the vicar.

"Well, my dear ma'am," persisted the colonel, incapable of suspecting shyness on the part of a full-grown woman of two-and-thirty, "what were you thinking?"

"Oh! nothing, sir—nothing very particular," she resumed, glancing at Dr. Markham for encouragement; "only it is a great many years since the doctor was at Cambridge—but once since he married, when he took his doctor's degree."

"You're a Cambridge man, then, are you, doctor," interrupted the colonel, not seeing her drift, because little surmising that his presence could so far impose on any person as to induce concealment of any kind.

"An old Johnian," replied Dr. Markham: "and my little wife has it in her head, I see, that I should enjoy a trip to my bachelor haunts, if you would engage me, instead of Captain Hamlyn, to show you the lions."

"By George! a capital thought," cried the colonel. "My dear lady, *why* didn't you speak out? Is Markham such a bully behind the curtain that you daren't call the tongue in your head your own? But, I say, doctor, how are we to manage about the shop? Who's to make the poor folks of Ovington the wiser and better for their wisdom and goodness on Sunday next, during our frolic?"

"As I have not been a day absent from home for the last three years," replied Dr. Markham, "I have many debts of service to my clerical brethren to call in. Having done duty some thirty times for my good friend Hurst of Braxham, he will scarcely grudge me a single Sunday in return."

"That's well settled then!" cried the colonel, setting down a cup of tea, which, by the care of his thrifty hostess, he fancied a thousand times better than he drank at home. "I like the thought of our excursion monstrously, doctor. And mind, on our return, I'll tell no tales, no histories about favourite old laundresses with cherry-coloured ribands. You started the hare, my dear ma'am, and I can't promise you when or where 'twill sit. And now, what say ye to a bit at backgammon?"

"What command of countenance you must have, my love; not to laugh outright this evening, when Colonel Hamilton was thanking young Hamlyn so cordially for his father's interposition with the Duke of Elvaston!" said Mrs. Markham to her husband, an hour or two afterward, when the sound of the colonel's chariot-wheels on the gravel announced the departure of their guests.

"It was no act of imposition on Captain Hamlyn's part that the old gentleman chose to account for his grace's civilities in his own way."

"Not on *Captain's* Hamlyn's. But it is clear to me that the father never lets slip an occasion of magnifying the extent of his services and power. Mr. Hamlyn fancies himself almost as much the guardian of Colonel Hamilton and his fortune as of poor little Sir Hugh Burlington."

"My dearest Kitty!"

"I am certain he has made up his mind to secure every guinea of the colonel's property for his children."

"Which of us would not, were it in our power? Between three and four hundred thousand pounds, Barlow assures me (and he has a nephew a clerk in the India House), in ready cash too! Worth twice as much as an estate of the same nominal value, as times go. Why, a single year's income would make a noble provision for our boys."

"The more reason, my dear Markham, that Mr. Hamlyn, who is rolling in riches, should have the generosity to leave a chance for other people. What is there in this world that man does not enjoy? What is there invented, year after year, in England, to promote health, comfort, or enjoyment, that does not find its way to Dean Park? Town and country, Ovington and Braxham, Birmingham or Warwick, everything that is best is bespoken for the Hamlyns. Who is served first, pray, the Duke of Elvaston, or Lord Vernon, or Richard Hamlyn, Esq.? Why, the banker! the banker, with his money down on the nail! the banker, who has no knowing steward to extort per centage from the tradespeople, but always his hand in his pocket, and a good long purse at the bottom of it!"

"I am sure we have no reason to find fault with his good fortune," observed Dr. Markham, warmly. "Never were the church's dues kept back a quarter of an hour by Richard Hamlyn—as punctual as the parish-clock in all his payments! And then, such an example to the poor: never betrayed into an angry word or harsh measure; his family as constant to divine service as Rugdon the clerk. Fair or foul, rain or shine, when was the Dean Park pew ever empty? The very servants might be cited for their exemplary behaviour; and as to the banker's wife, show me her equal for sterling sense and equability of temper! Verily, her price is above rubies."

"An easy matter for people to keep an even temper who are never ruffled by the difficulty of making two ends meet," observed poor Mrs.

Markham, a little jealous. "Life goes *gin* enough for those who roll through it on golden castors!"

"I am sure, my dear love, we have little cause to complain," cried the conscientious vicar. "The living is moderate, 'tis true—four hundred a year, and the Easter offering, is not an archbishopric. But it is competence, my dear Kitty! and then think of the incalculable advantages we derive from having such a friend as Mr. Hamlyn. Think how kindly he has managed our little fortune for us, with as much interest as if we had belonged to his family. *Your* three thousand pounds my dear, and the fifteen hundred of my college savings, would have remained £4500 to the day of doom, for any power I had of multiplying the product; but, instead of the miserable hundred and sixty pounds a year we should have got from the public funds (which, between ourselves, Kitty, have been so shifted about of late years that one never feels certain a government sponge may not be applied some fine morning to wipe them out altogether), Hamlyn managed to obtain me two hundred per annum, at once, by an excellent mortgage. For the last five years the interest has been accumulating, for I had rather go without butter to my bread than touch a shilling of what I always promised you to lay by as a provision for the boys—"

"And poor little Kitty," interposed the wife, stoutly.

"So that, in addition to what now amounts to two hundred and forty pounds per annum, we have nearer six thousand pounds than five to bequeath to the children, if it pleased the Almighty to call us to himself. Now all this, my love, as you ought never to forget, is Hamlyn's doing!"

"I never do forget it!" replied poor Mrs. Markham, "and I suspect *he* never forgets it either; at least, when anything goes wrong in the parish, or the churchwarden gives him trouble, he addresses you in a tone far less respectful than he does Mr. Ramsay, his butler."

"But for this security for our family," added Dr. Markham, earnestly, "we should be unable, out of my small living, to do half we *now* do for the poor."

"We should certainly be obliged to think twice about a thousand trifles which are now never missed!" replied Mrs. Markham, almost softened.

"Not that there is much call upon us for *more* than trifles," added her husband, in a tone of compunction. "I wish you could hear all Hurst of Braxham says to me about my good fortune in having such a parishioner as Hamlyn the banker! The schools and infirmaries of Ovington supported by *him* were cited in the Education Committee before the House, and mentioned in the Quarterly Review! Moreover, Hamlyn's connexion with the County Institution, the Lunatic Asylum, County Hospital, foundation schools, and so forth, is of inestimable advantage to the poor people of Ovington."

"Very true! Still I cannot divest myself of the idea that his connexion with these charities is purely a matter of business. To one he is treasurer; the others bank with his firm. It is not, for instance, like the good Samaritan out-of-the-heart sort of charity that opens the purse-strings of Colonel Hamilton!"

"My dearest wife, I could almost fear you were getting envious of the prosperity of the Hamlyns!" said the vicar, gravely. "Must I

say to you, like the preacher of old, 'Instead of a friend, become not an enemy; for thereby shalt thou inherit an ill name, even as a sinner that hath a double tongue?'

"I dare say I am very wrong," replied his wife; "if you say so, I *must* be wrong. But for all that, I cannot help feeling that Mr. Hamlyn (to use Mrs. Johnston's expression) has fixed his fangs into the good old man at Burlington Manor."

"Mrs. Johnston? What! the colonel's house-keeper? You don't mean to say you have allowed that gossiping old woman to run on to you, as she sometimes tries to do to me, about the colonel's private affairs?"

"It was no fault of mine, Markham. You invited her to tea, to hear the school-children sing their hymn, on Christmas eve. I have no housekeeper's room, like the Hamlyns, nor could I ask a lady in a real India shawl and Leghorn bonnet to sit down in my bricked kitchen; so, as you were dining at Dean Park, she took her tea in the parlour."

"And there you sat together, seasoning your hyson with scandal about my friend Hamlyn!"

"Indeed, I did no such thing! Mrs. Johnston naturally spoke of her master, whom, having been in his service thirty years, she loves like a brother; and she declares, poor woman, that nothing has gone right in the Hamilton family from the moment Mr. Hamlyn got the management of his affairs! The children were sent off to Europe, fine healthy babes, and one after the other all dropped off."

"Does the old lady accuse poor Hamlyn, then, of poisoning his friend's children?" cried the doctor, laughing outright at the earnest tone of his wife.

"Not quite. But I believe she *really* thinks him gifted with the evil eye! Because it suited the banker, she says, to stake down her master within the clutch of Dean Park, away from London and his friends, the poor old man was hustled out of his fine house in Portland Place, where there was a housekeeper's room fit for an empress."

"At his age, *hustled* out of his house! My dear Kitty!"

"And now they are down in the country, she complains, all his rarities, all his good things, find their way to Dean Park—mangoes—buffaloes' humps—oranzetas. Day after day, the finest flowers in the conservatory are cut for Miss Hamlyn; and whenever, in Anderson's time, there used to be a dish of early fruit or vegetables, off it went in a basket to Dean, as—"

"Come, come, come!" interrupted the doctor, "we can testify that a vast number of those baskets found their way to the Vicarage!"

"I don't deny it, and so would double the number were it not for the Hamlyns, who, Heaven knows, have forcing-houses enough of their own. They certainly manage to feather their nest, while other birds, less active, are driven forth from theirs! Poor Lady Burlington! Poor little Sir Hugh! Little did I think, when ten guineas were sent down to the village to ring for that dear boy's birth, as son and heir to one of the finest estates in the county, that, within five years afterward, the child and mother would be in exile, and the father in his grave!"

"I suppose you are now wanting to prove that Hamlyn is the cause of Sir Roger Burlington's flinging away his money on the turf?"

"I *might*, perhaps, without much difficulty!

If Mr. Hamlyn had not facilitated the mortgages on his estates, Sir Roger would not have been able to embarrass his property to such an extent."

"Where there is a will to be extravagant there is always a way. At all events, Hamlyn's capital management in letting the manor will bring the minor round, so that he need never be the worse for his father's improvidence."

"I shouldn't be much surprised if it were to prove that Mrs. Hamlyn was a trifle the better for it," murmured Mrs. Markham, but in so low a voice (as she finished replacing in their velvet partitions the handsome ivory backgammon men presented to the doctor by Colonel Hamilton) that the vicar, finding his spouse in an unredicable humour, of opposition to his patron the banker, judged it better to turn a deaf ear, and light his candle for bed.

The vicar might have spared all attempt at defence! The blame of stewards'-rooms or parsonage-parlours was about as important to the well-established and self-sufficing reputation of Hamlyn the banker, as the ripple of a midsummer sea to the stability of the Eddystone Light-house! Established on his Lombard-street throne as firmly as the sovereign on that of St. James, Richard Hamlyn might boldly bid defiance to petty slanders. All about him was fair and prosperous. His house was built upon a rock.

The firm of Hamlyn and Co., if unsupported by enormous capital in the private property of the partners, so as to connect it with the great financial operations of the kingdom, was trebly secure in its own moderation, steadiness, and good renown. Bernard Hamlyn, the junior and virtually sleeping partner, was the son of an uncle of Richard's, who, dying at the same period as the rash constructor of Dean Park, had left a schoolboy—and a remarkably dull one—on the hands of his nephew, as his successor to a moiety of the business. Luckily for the comfort of the more qualified cousin, Bernard, on attaining his majority, experienced no ambition to disturb the tenour of his excellent management. All he desired was, that his cousin should be punctual in his quarterly surrender of half the profits of the concern, deducting two thousand per annum for his own trouble in adjusting what, for treble that amount, Richard would not have remitted to any other hands than his own.

Richard Hamlyn was consequently sole monarch of all he surveyed in his temple of Mammon in Lombard-street. Not that it exhibited much superficial splendour to excite his vain-glory. If it had "that within which passed show," show it disdained. The house was of dingy brick, with low-browed, smoke-stained ceilings, and desks and counters of discoloured mahogany; unlike those gorgeous banking-houses of the day (resembling gin-palaces in more particulars than one), which seem to have thriven, like parasite plants, out of the substance of others. The walls of the counting-house were of stucco, discoloured to a sallow sootiness of complexion almost rivalling that of their proprietor. Even the timepiece appended thereto was an old-fashioned piece of goods, monoptical and full-orbed, like the staring cyclopean eye of Time, keeping watch over the quill-driving community below.

Whenever a defaulter entered that grim tabernacle of money-changing to account for a dishonoured acceptance, explain away an ugly

balance-sheet, or implore indulgence for a pending claim, the rigidly business-like character of the spot insinuated in iron whispers, as in Dante's *Inferno*, that "*ogni speranza*" might as well be left on the threshold. Whereas, when a new client, well to do in the world, and about to make a heavy deposit, pushed his way through the swing-doors, whose panes were fiercely defended by a strong network of brass, he was apt to murmur, "Goon! business-like, and good! No show, no flummery, no take in." Even the mechanical demureness wherewith the middle-aged clerk took down his name and address, returning, in the same unconcerned manner, his own receipt for the thousands or tens of thousands "to account for on demand," inspired more confidence than the whipper-snapper mopings and mowings of West End obsequence.

In that vast, dingy, dreary chamber, however, with its double row of desks and stools, its leaden standishes and buff-bound folios, its foul atmosphere and factory-like whirring murmur—in that chamber, presenting no single object pleasing to the ear or eye, a mere organ, as it were, among the viscera of commerce, a foul, unsightly thing indispensable to the vitality of the civic frame—in that joyless, loveless, graceless spot, whatever the banker might become among the domestic irritations of Dean Park, "Richard was himself again!" the Napoleon of the numeration-table, the Talleyrand of admiring stockbrokers and bewildered cashiers.

Strange to relate, little as the banker was liked elsewhere, in his house of business he was beloved. His clerks had either grown gray in the house, or were the sons of its antecedent graybeards. Among these, the banker was a demigod; partly because, in a region where pelf was the one thing needful, a strong box the ark of the covenant, and the multiplication-table the table of the law, the moneyed man, the man possessed both of the substance, Property, and the shadow, Credit, was a prophet—yea, more than a prophet; but also, in some measure, on account of his fair and generous dealings with all persons in his employ.

In the first place, he was a sultan without a vizier—"l'état c'est moi" being his Bourbonic rule of government. There was no confidential clerk to "principal" it over the rest; and the counting-house was the only republic in Europe smaller than that of San Marino, or possessing a more absolute president. Scarcely one of the clerks, however, who had not, at some moment or other, become the object of munificence on the part of his master, either at his marriage, the sickness of a child, the death of a parent, or some other domestic exigency, which appeared to reach the ears of the head of the firm as if carried thither by a bird of the air. Nay, on two occasions within the experience of those who at present plied their quills in the service of Richard and Bernard Hamlyn and Co., a sprouting Coutts—(for, after all, the renowned Thomas Coutts, out of whose substance dukes and duchesses have sprung like mushrooms, was but a banking-house clerk!)—a sprouting Coutts, on the eve of falling into the abyss of dissipation, or, rather, the quagmire of lowborn, vulgar vice—had been reclaimed by a private and fatherly admonition on the part of the grave banker, accompanied by the means of wiping off the pecuniary portion of the stigma incurred. These were acts of great mercy, or strokes of great policy; like the visit of Napo-

leon to his plague-stricken soldiers, or of Louis-Philippe to a cholera hospital. At all events, the clerks thus gratuitously obliged became the faithful freedmen of a new Cæsar.

Every day, when Hamlyn passed through the counting-house—spruce, black, lustrous—with a brow serene as that of Canning, and a smile as bland as that of Peel—to issue forth into the city-throng (where wealth modestly walks the streets, and the shabby fellow you run against at the corner of Cornhill carries, perhaps, sixty thousand pounds, in bank-notes, in the inner pocket of his well-buttoned but seedy surcoat), the clerks nearest the window would peer over the blinds to watch, with eyes of affection, his exit into the street, where hats were respectfully touched to him by all the men of substance, while the sweeper at the crossing for once forbore to be vociferous, so certain was he of receiving a spontaneous gratuity from "good Mr. Hamlyn!"

Though the head of the firm of Hamlyn and Co. scrupulously refrained from flourishing at any moment in the eyes of his people the insignia of his opulence—though he arrived in Lombard-street from Cavendish Square in the same shabby cabriolet which had made its journey thither daily for years, so punctual to its minute that, had Hamlyn and his groom been wanting, the old bay horse would doubtless have conveyed the vehicle in safety among the coal-carts and omnibuses of the Strand, and stopped, from the force of habit, at precisely eleven minutes and a half past two at the comping-house door, they loved, to know that an admirably-appointed equipage would convey their respected principal at half past seven to his dinner at the Speaker's, or the Archbishop of Canterbury's, or some wealthy country baronet of a client's in Curzon-street or Eaton Square. Rejoicing in the solid comfort of his establishment, they were proud to feel that dukes were his guests, and privy councillors his claret companions; and, on the mornings following a debate, of which "Mr. Hamlyn next rose" formed a prominent feature in the columns of the daily papers, the *Times* and *Herald* belonging to the neighbouring chop-houses assumed an additional coating of thumb-grease, thanks to the diligent and reiterated perusal of the clerkhood of Hamlyn and Co.

It was indeed gratifying, after efforts of eloquence such as had drawn forth the thanks of the Chamber of the Exchequer, and groans of anguish from the opposition benches, to find their great man calm and affable as usual; when even the clerk, whose function it was to inscribe the names of Hamlyn and Co. in the subscription lists brought round to the merchants and bankers of the metropolis, whether for the erection of a statue to some eminent slayer of men, or hospital for the sick and maimed created under his slaughter, could scarcely refrain from adding an additional flourish to the "Co.," which at present represented only the refractory Henry, and a sickly son of Bernard Hamlyn, still under birchment at Harrow.

In his dingy little skylighted back shop or parlour—the consulting room of his financial science, the boudoir of his moneyed leisure—Richard Hamlyn, surrounded by his iron safes and deed chests, was entitled to seclude himself like some alchemist or necromancer of the olden time, saying that he was successful in producing, amid its gloomy solitude, that magic gold in which the crucibles of the former were fatally,

wanting. It was only in case some grand exigency, some claim of unwonted magnitude, or the appeal of some powerful constituent having advice to ask as well as money to deposit, that the head clerk presumed to knock at the door of this sanctum, with intimation that "Mr. Hamlyn was wanted."

On the day, for instance, when Colonel Hamilton and Doctor Markham were bowling away, as merrily as four horses could carry them, across Northamptonshire towards Cambridge, a modest "May I speak to you, if you please, sir, for a moment?" had enabled Spilsby, the bald-headed chief clerk, to usher into the consulting-room one of their favourite clients, Dr. Grantham, an eminent physician, whose practice of ten thousand per annum placed him, in the opinion of the firm, on a level with Boerhaave or Galen.

"I am intruding, I fear?" said he, addressing Hamlyn, who rose to press him affectionately by the hand. "But I want, my dear sir, to ask you a little word of friendly advice. 'We doctors,' continued he, with a smile, 'are accused of making quick work with patients who ask us for a bit of friendly advice! But with you I will dare my fate.'"

"Pray sit down!" exclaimed Hamlyn, pushing forward the least uneasy of two uncomfortable arm-chairs. "How is Mrs. Grantham?"

"Well, I thank you—that is, as well as the anxious mother of twelve children can ever pretend to be. I have brought you, not my week's fees to carry to account, but a lump of money for investment—a lump of money, the possession of which one of my driblet-earning calling ought, perhaps, to explain, lest he be suspected of having taken earnest for the despatch of a bishop or a cabinet minister! The truth is, my dear sir, that these ten thousand pounds comprehend the whole of my scrapings together till I was two-and-forty, when I sold them out of the five per cents. (for there were five per cents. on the earth in those days!) for a very sacred purpose. My brother, Dick Grantham, had an opportunity of purchasing a prothonotaryship, and not a guinea in the world for the purpose. An insurance on his life, and his promise to repay me in ten years, determined me to risk what then constituted the sole provision for my children. You don't know my brother Dick, I fancy? The finest fellow breathing—the soul of a king, sir! I could hardly prevail on him to take the money, for he knew its importance to my family. However, through my solicitors, I got the business settled without his knowledge; and the consequence was, that Dick married and settled, and instead of a pettifogging attorney, became a gentleman, and the happiest man on earth; and last week, sir (a year within the term prescribed), my ten thousand pounds were paid over to the hands of my men of business! Now they suggest a mortgage by way of investment, and have got one to the tune of six per cent. on the estate of an Irish earl. But I don't like mortgages—least of all, on the estates of Irish earls—and so have come to ask your advice."

During this apostrophe, an ordinary observer would have seen nothing in Richard Hamlyn but the attentive, courteous banker, wishing his client to be a little more sparing of family details (time being money, as poor Richard says) but prepared to give his grave and disinterested verdict in the sequel. A more discerning eye would have discovered, in the recesses of his

deep-set eyes, varying indications of triumph, rapacity, and mistrust. The banker evidently hated to hear of moneys being paid over to any man of business but a banker, just as Dr. Grantham would have been indignant had Hamlyn talked of consulting Keate or Brodie about a child sick of the scarlatina.

"I dare say you fancy," resumed Dr. Grantham, attributing his silence and hesitation to unconcern, "you, with your millinary, Rothschildish, stock-exchange ideas, that the disposal of a little fleabite like these ten thousand pounds ought not to disturb my night's rest, or spoil my appetite for my roast mutton! But let me tell you, my dear Hamlyn, that we poor fellows, who pick up our guineas as pigeons peas, one at a time, instead of accomplishing thousands as you do by a lucky turn of the money-markets or news of an insurrection at Barcelona, are obliged to look sharp after our farthings! I'm in the receipt of a noble income! but I and it may drop to-morrow; for, as in most professions, we doctors wear ourselves out in working for nothing, so that, when something comes, we are almost past our labour! The insurance offices try to make me believe that, in spite of my jolly face, I'm a poor crazy fellow; and that, instead of living to the age of Methuselah, as I threaten, my apoplexy stares them in the face. In short, my dear sir, I am not so well off but that these ten thousand constitute a vital object to my bantlings. What do you advise me to do? Government securities? East India bonds? Railway shares? WHAT?"

"If you will give me leave, I will think it over," replied the banker, unknitting the brows which had assumed an attitude of cogitation. "These kind of investments depend, of course, in a great measure, on the position of the parties; whether a small, steady, certain income be the object, or sure eventual profit of larger amount. I was offered the other day, on my private account, an occasion of partnership in one of the most lucrative concerns in the city. My responsibilities as a banker forbidding me to involve myself in any speculation which could, by any chance or possibility, affect the interests of the firm, I could not entertain the proposal, concerning which I am, at present, bound to secrecy. But I will consult the parties, and should they sanction me in extending the offer to a friend with the same facilities, believe me, my dear Grantham, few things in this world would afford me sincerer pleasure than to prove the means of obtaining so good a thing for a man so truly value as yourself. The investment would secure a provision for two of your sons hereafter, by a share in—but I fear I must say no more! Be assured only that I shall regard and cater for your interest as I would for my own. I need not tell you that I am a family-man, and qualified to feel for the father of a family."

"My dear Hamlyn," cried the doctor, extending his hand (which he was rarely in the habit of doing, unless for the purpose of feeling a pulse or taking a fee!), "how shall I thank you for entering so readily into my views?"

"Not another word on the subject! Wait till I have been able to make good my promises," replied the banker. "Meanwhile, you had best leave the money with us. I fancy we can let you have exchequer-bills for it, if you think proper."

"Scarcely worth while, as a more durable in-

vestment is so shortly to be made," replied the doctor, producing from his pocket-book ten fair-complexioned notes for *One Thousand* each, which he had just received at Coutts's in exchange for the check of his solicitors in Lincoln's Inn.

"I will give you a simple receipt, then, and ask the favour of you to look in on Saturday," said Hamlyn, taking from the desk before him a file of paper forms, one of which he filled up with an acknowledgment for ten thousand pounds, and signed in the name of Hamlyn and Co.

"A thousand thanks," cried the doctor, as grateful as though he were accepting, instead of conferring an obligation. "On Saturday, then!" continued he, taking his consultation-book from his pocket, and inscribing the date among those of his professional visits; "on Saturday, at three."

To such a man as Grantham, it was indispensable to do the honours of the house; and Hamlyn accordingly suited the action to the word, after saying, "Pray let me see whether your carriage is in waiting!" In spite of his visitor's prohibitions, he accompanied him through the banking-house towards the door, more than one of the clerks squinting upward from his laborious ink-letting to examine the outward map of the client honoured by the personal escort of the head of the house, while a girl with a shabby shawl pinned over her still shabbier gown, and a porter with a knot on his head, both of whom were staring away their impatience in the background, with small checks to be cashed after their betters had been served, stood aside for the passage of the spruce, comely, well-fed gentlemen, as respectfully as though majesty itself were in presence.

"Mr. Hamlyn, I believe, sir. Please, sir, I'd be glad of a few minutes with you," said a decently-dressed woman in black, intercepting the passage of the banker on his return through the counting-house to his private room, after parting with the doctor.

"My clerk, ma'am, will attend to you instantly. Here, Spilsby!" cried Mr. Hamlyn, beckoning over the counter the bald-headed clerk, who was at that moment assisting the cashier in the payment of checks; trying, as he spoke, to escape from her detaining hand into his *sacred sanctum*.

"I'd rather a deal, sir, with your leave, settle with one o' the partners, sir," persisted the woman; and something in the wilfulness of her appeal instantly relieved the experienced banker from an apprehension, inspired at the first glance by her mourning suit and withered face, that he was about to be bothered with the dolefuls of a widow with one of those prodigious families of orphans, which newspaper advertisements are constantly providing, in their largest capitals, for the tender mercies of "THE STRANGE WHOM HEAVEN HAS BLESSED WITH AFFLUENCE."

"Be good enough to step this way, madam," said he, his countenance relaxing from its sudden contraction; and releasing Spilsby by a nod, he opened the door of the Blue Chamber, which his companion seemed scarcely less awe-struck at entering than if it were the royal closet.

"You remember me now, sir, I dare say! Jane Darley, sir," said she, hesitating about taking the offered chair, and fumbling with her cloak as though her hands were trying to knead her into courage; "widder of John Darley, sir, as

kept the tap o' Lemon-tree Yard," she continued, seeing that the stony-faced banker made no sign of recognition; "John Darley, sir, as banked with you, and the good gentleman your father as was, afore you."

Richard Hamlyn bowed thankfully, as expected, having been long aware that people of Jane Darley's class, who have ever deposited a hundred pounds in the hands of a banker, consider themselves thenceforward main props of the solidity of the firm.

"I was *sure* you'd recollect, sir, when you was once put upon rememb'ring!" resumed the widow, with growing confidence, "cause you an't likely to have forgot the four hundred pouns, sir, you sold out for me when I had to set up my son Tummus in business."

Again the banker bowed, though less thankfully.

"Which was the reason, sir, I axed particular to see yourself, instead of leaving matters of such consequence to the young gentlemen I spuk to without. John Darley, sir, if you remember, left me his hegs-heketricks, and a deal of trouble it's been to me, with the debts to call in—many on 'em bad uns, I'm sorry to say—besides the tap I attend to."

"I rather think, madam," interrupted Hamlyn, "that my clerk, Mr. Spilsby, has made your affairs his especial consideration, and he is therefore, perhaps, better qualified to—"

"I ax your pardon, sir," replied the widow Darley, again driven to the resource of fumbling her cloak for a countenance. "I don't think he've studied 'em at all; for when I wanted to give him the four 'undred poun to sell back into the funds—"

"To *buy* into the funds," amended the banker, in a low voice.

"He wanted to give me a receipt, sir, all as one as if I was paying a debt; which, as you know, sir, neither John Darley nor me was ever a farden beholden to the firm," continued the widow, with an air of injured dignity.

"You wish, in short, that we should purchase for you the value of four hundred pounds, in consols?" demanded Hamlyn, coming to the point. "In the name of Jane Darley, widow, I presume?"

"Yes, sir; in the name of Jane Darley, widder, sir, of Lemon-tree Yard! for I still keep the tap, sir. After poor John Darley was taken away, sir, I found myself with—"

"You have brought the amount in question, I think you said, madam?" persisted the banker. "I've brought the money, sir, and the stock-receipts for the last sums as John Darley sold in—"

"Bought in," again amended the banker. "Just in order to show you, sir, whereabouts my stock lies, that they may all be lumped together. For I've a hard matter, as it is, sir, to make out the queer ways of the Bank, when I goes to receive my half-hearly dividend; a hone woman, sir, is sure to be put upon in places like the stocks; and as I'm not in circumstances to employ an attorney for every triffe, I—"

"If it were agreeable to you, madam, we should be most happy to relieve you of the trouble," observed Mr. Hamlyn, gravely. "Your dividends may be received with those of the house, and either carried to your account, or paid over to you, as most agreeable."

"I'm sure, Mr. Hamlyn, sir, you're most kind and consid'rate, sir," replied the widow Darley,

her nervous twitchings of the cloak subsiding into a series of grateful courtesies; "and I return you many thanks, sir. John Darley always used to say, sir, poor feller, that *your* bank was as safe as the Bank of England; and, God knows, 'tis a deal civiller, for *there* they snap one up as if one came shop-lifting instead of only wanting to ask for one's own."

"If you will intrust these papers to me, madam, I will take care to have a power of attorney drawn out, and forwarded to you for signature," said Hamlyn, with the most conciliating blandness.

"I return you many thanks, sir. I am sure, sir, when I come to you about buying out the four hundred pound when I set up poor Tummas in the Borough, sir (as tallow-chandler, sir, and a very comfortable business he's made of it!), I little thought I should get my money back again, out of the fire, as a body may say. However, please God, I did my duty to him, as John Darley's hegs-heketricks, and—"

"Four hundred pounds!" said Mr. Hamlyn, in a sonorous, business-like voice, after having counted over eighty crumpled, greasy, five-pound notes, conveying both to the smell and touch indications of their transit through the hands of Thomas Darley, the Borough tallow-chandler. "My clerk will wait upon you to-morrow morning in Lemon-tree Yard."

"And with that, my dear Mrs. Snaggs," said the widow Darley (when relating the scene, an hour afterward, over a tumbler of brandy and water, in the dark cupboard denominated a back-parlour by her friend and neighbour, Mrs. Snaggs, the corn-chandler's wife of the Lemon-tree stable-yard), "with that, my dear, he waited upon me to the door with the look of a lord, and yet so affable and so brotherly-like, as if 'twas a pleasure to him to do a service to the widder and fatherless! And so you see, Mrs. Snaggs, I'm to be spared the trouble of rigging myself out twice a year, and omnibus fares, and what not, to go bobbing up and down them bank offices—showed in here, and pushed out there—and a surly clerk axing me at last (after looking at my papers) whether my name was Jane Darley, as if 'twas like to be anything else! And all's to be done for me as if I was a lady in the land!"

"And a mint o' money you'll be charged for the doing on it!" cried Mrs. Snaggs, who was keeping an eye to the shop through the glass partition, the chocolate-coloured window-curtain being carefully pinned aside to facilitate the good lady's watch over her bins of peas and beans, and sample-sacks of corn.

"Not I! Leave me alone, Mrs. Snaggs, to take care o' the main chance! 'Kind words butter no parsnips,' thinks I; so I 'spressly asked what would be the charge. And what d'ye think was his an'ser? Why, that 'twas the dooty o' the firm to oblige the widder of an old and respectit constit'ent like John Darley! I vow to goodness I could have kissed Mr. Hamlyn's precious feet at that moment, for the sort of heavenly smile with which he talked of respecting my poor dear good man as is dead and gone!"

And, thanks to the touch of nature, or the mahogany-coloured glass of brandy and water she had gradually emptied, the widow proceeded to bathe with tears the memory of John Darley of Lemon-tree Yard, and the urbanity of Hamlyn the banker.

CHAPTER XI.

"Why did I change my college life,
He cries, "for benefice and wife?"

LÆRTA.

On the day appointed for Colonel Hamilton's excursion to Cambridge, the travellers set forth with the spirits of boys of fifteen rather than of threescore. They were the very men to take delight, like Dr. Johnson, in being whirled along a good road in an easy chaise, and still greater in chattering away the evening at a crack inn, over a roaring fire, amid the ringing of bells, the scuffling of waiters, the rattle of night-coaches, and the fumes of Port-wine negus and brandy punch.

With Dr. Markham, the expedition amounted to a party of pleasure. For the good vicar had not lost sight of his own sober fireside half a dozen times in as many years; and though somewhat formalized in deportment by the gravity of his functions, and still more by having officiated as a college tutor during the early part of his life, was by nature almost as genial of temper and temperament as the old colonel.

Many were the merry anecdotes mutually, confided of a subaltern's life in the East, and a sizar's paraship at home, which enlivened the fireside of "the best inn's best room" in the good town of Northampton, where they stopped for the night; and Dr. Markham retired to rest, almost ashamed to reflect in how different a mood, of mind he was about to re-enter Cambridge from that in which he had departed, with his bride, nine years before, to take possession of his college living. The worthy man did not, of course, perceive that he was by no means the worse Christian for being somewhat less of a prig.

On the morrow they were off early, intending to arrive for an hour's daylight before dinner-time, that Colonel Hamilton might engage his young friend to join them at the Hoop.

"A queer fancy of this lad of Hamlyn's!" said the colonel, after settling himself in a comfortable corner of his easy chair. "A very queer fancy, to spend his last vacation scampering over Italy, and this one at Cambridge, with such a home as Dean Park open-armed to receive him!"

"He is reading hard for his degree," replied the doctor, always cautious in his remarks where the family at Dean was concerned (for the benefactions of Hamlyn to the parish placed him before the vicar in the light of a patron), "and may find it necessary to repair the idleness produced by his summer's pleasures."

"But with Henry Hamlyn's talents, doctor, he might have been pretty sure of passing!"

"Not, however, of attaining the high honours expected of him."

"But why the deuce *must* he attain high honours? What's the use on't? He don't pretend to a mitre or the woolsack; and what the plague a better banker will he make for having strained every nerve for university distinctions?"

"A man is never the worse thought of in public or private life for having proved himself a first-rate scholar," replied the vicar. "Look at Macaulay, look at Canning, look at—"

"At present I only want to look at Henry Hamlyn, my dear doctor!" interrupted Colonel Hamilton; "and I see as plain as a pikestaff that all these classics and metaphysics have served to put him sadly out of conceit of Cock-er's Arithmetic! Is there common sense in it,

I only ask you? is there common sense in it, for a young fellow to give up five or six of the best years of his life to the acquirement of two languages talked nowhere on the face of the globe; whose works are all translated into good, sensible English; and which, to my thinking, since they're called the *dead* languages, were just as well *buried* and put out of the way?"

The doctor's pride of scholarship forbade all affectation of acquiescence in this illiberal proposition; and if Walter Hamlyn had decided the colonel to be a Goth, the vicar was beginning to regard him as a Vandal!

"I tell ye what, doctor," resumed the old gentleman, vexed at his silence, "in my opinion, if all the time and brains expended upon Latin and Greek for the last five hundred years had been applied to the study of the sciences, which really forward the progress of mankind, we should have been millions of miles nearer the moon, and thousands nearer the centre by this time; and so, maybe, have given the poor their coals, this bitter winter, for sixpence the chaldron, and sold 'em their linsey-woolsey at twopence a yard!"

Doctor Markham ventured a word or two concerning the value of moral enlightenment and mental civilization to the welfare of mankind, but was speedily interrupted.

"Pho, pho, pho! If your law-makers or gospel-preachers require the addition of Plato and Socrates to teach 'em their business, what becomes of Christianity?" cried Colonel Hamilton. "The Bible, sir, and algebra, afford ballast enough for any man's understanding that wants settling! As to the influence of learning on individual prosperity, look at *me*, doctor! As there was then no Haileybury by way of preparation for Indy, I was dunced over Greek and Latin at the Charter House from ten till fifteen, and from that day to this have never opened a classic! Fortunately for me, I happened to have what is called a turn for mechanics (as my family might have found out from my having managed to manufacture a redcap's draw-bucket afore I was breeched!). So, on reaching Bombay, having already a crotchet in my head which determined me to fight like a dragon to conquer an independence, I set my shoulder to the wheel, and studied at the college there till I made some figure in the engineering department. Once employed, I'd the luck to compass a great hit by the invention of a caisson for a lock on the military canal at Chindrapore, where I was stationed; and my fortune was made, sir. I got employment, and employment begot spirits and zeal. And now pray tell me, what would all the Homer and Horace in the world have done towards helping me to scrape together a plum? whereas, if I'd gone out to Indy a first-rate mathematician, a first-rate civil engineer—"

"We do rather pique ourselves at Cambridge on our mathematical proficiency!" slyly rejoined the doctor. "However, to return to the present pursuits of young Mr. Hamlyn, I fancy that, being less pampered by his father than his handsome elder brother, Henry may find his college life a pleasanter thing than the formality of Cavendish Square or seclusion of Dean Park. You don't know what an exciting existence is that of a young man distinguished in the University, and endowed with Henry Hamlyn's means, both worldly and intellectual!"

And forthwith the good doctor began to enlarge anew, as though he had never before

touched upon the subject, on the pleasures of college cheer, college honours, college sociality—the ale, milk-punch, and aristocratic "windings" of Trin. Coll.; which, having the usual influence of a thrice-told tale, the sonorous breathings of Hamilton in his cozy corner (as if keeping cadence to the rising of the postboys in their stirrups) soon announced that he was happy in the land of dreams.

While enjoying himself in that aerial region, an unlucky change came over the face of the earth. A drizzly rain began to beat against the carriage-windows, shutting out the scarcely more cheering prospect of the county of Hunts; and when the colonel began rubbing his eyes at last, on being jogged by his companion as they entered the High-street of Cambridge, there was unquestionably nothing in the scene to justify the excitement and exultation beaming in the looks of the D.D. of St. John's. The plashy pavement and streaming kennels of a dingy, tortuous street, along which a few drizzle-suited collegians were straggling through the mists of a rainy evening, amid half-lighted shops, whose twinklings were scarcely discernible through the dim windows, imparted no enlivenment to a spot, the quaint antiquities of which require fresh air and broad daylight to assume their more imposing dignity in the eyes of the stranger.

"By George, doctor! you deserve to have lived and died the fellow of a college—if you compare this close, fusty town with the open pastures of Dean Park!" cried Colonel Hamilton, as the carriage bowled onward to the Hoop, where the jingling bell called forth the alacrity of landlord and waiters to do homage to the proprietor of so handsome a carriage; some old gentleman of fortune, they decided, come to matriculate his son and heir at Cambridge, under the instructions of the reverend private tutor, his companion.

Either his nap or the rainy afternoon had operated unfavourably on his spirits; for Colonel Hamilton began on the very threshold to institute unfavourable comparisons with the comfortable, wholesome, hearty country inn of the day before.

Instead of the straight-combed hair, blue coat, and corduroys of the half-host, half-farmer of their last halting-place, the head-waiter and his subs displayed an impertinent *fac simile* of the young men whose cigars they were in the habit of lighting, and whose current accounts for broiled fowls, devilled kidneys, bishops, and cardinals, they were in the habit of "leaving," so as to authorize an entry in their master's books of—"to bill delivered."

Ushered into a gaudy parlour, scented with spirits and tobacco so as to resemble the barrack-room of a marching regiment far more than was compatible with the decorum of Alma Mater, the colonel was pursued by the head-waiter, who stirred up the already roaring fire till it emulated the blast furnace of a foundry, while the subordinates followed, with officious zeal, bustling in the chaise-seats and dressing-boxes they knew must be instantly removed into the bedrooms, before Johnston, who was paying the postboys, could prevent their interference.

While Colonel Hamilton stood as near the hearth-rug as the tremendous fire of glowing cinders would allow, wondering when the exit of these troublesome bustlers would admit of shutting the door to the exclusion of the damp draught of evening air, the crimson-faced host,

attired in a cobalt blue stock, made his appearance, bearing in his hand a strip of paper half a yard long, which, to any but a new comer within his gates, would have assumed an alarming aspect.

"Will you please to order dinner, sir?" said he, with the deference due to a traveller with four horses and an "own man" of Johnston's respectability.

"Can you tell me, pray, where Mr. Hamlyn of Trinity is to be found?" inquired the colonel in his turn, preoccupied with the object of his journey.

"No, sir, I cannot, sir. Will you be pleased to order dinner, sir?" persisted the host, equally intent upon his object of the moment.

"I will thank you to inquire," said Colonel Hamilton, accepting the offered protocol as his best chance of obtaining immediate attention.

"John, inquire whether a Mr. Humbling's in college," said the host, addressing his head waiter; who, having in his turn commissioned a sub, Boots, or one of the "somebodies" always hanging about an inn yard, was despatched in search of information which nobody was interested to impart, leaving the hero in the blue stock to hazard a few observations to the supposed private tutor on the vexation of the afternoon having turned out rainy; while the eye of Colonel Hamilton wandered vacantly over the strip of paper in his hand, setting forth, with a perfection of calligraphy that did honour to the clerkship of the University, a catalogue of all the soups included in Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery, all the fishes of the sea, and all the fowls of the poultry-yard, besides made dishes in endless variety.

Insufficiently versed in the habits of such resorts to know that the turbot he ordered would probably make its appearance in the shape of a brill, and the promised gravy soup as washy broth, with a dogger-bank of black pepper at the bottom, Colonel Hamilton, in the expectation of Henry Hamlyn's arrival, issued orders for as good a dinner as the yard of foolscap before him undertook to promise; and having so far benefited by the measure as to rid himself of the presence of the gentleman who so much resembled one of his own porter-butts dressed out by an advertising clothes-warehouse, waited patiently the return of his messenger.

A new persecution, however, now commenced. The bustling waiters, having removed the luggage, reappeared with trestles and trays, cruet-stands and bread-baskets; again leaving open the door, and beginning to lay the cloth and refold the napkins with as much fuss and emphasis as for a dinner-party of fourteen.

Still no answer arrived. The intelligence that "no Mr. Humbling was known in Trinity" not being likely to add an item to the bill, was withheld in order to be brought in by the landlord with the soup-tureen; nor was it till after repeated rings at the bell, and the despatch of as many messengers as issue per diem from Downing-street during the session of Parliament, that intelligible answer was at length delivered to Colonel Hamilton, to the effect that "Mr. Henry Hamlyn, of Trinity, was not in college, having quitted Cambridge some days before for London."

"So, so, so!" cried Colonel Hamilton. "This is the way these youngsters impose upon the old fogeys. This admirable Crichton, who fancies himself too learned for a banker, and persuades

his poor, fond, foolish mother and sister that he's sapping his brains out at Trinity, is most likely, at this moment, lounging on the Chain Pier at Brighton, or resolving the problems of the Christmas Pantomime! A pretty couple o' blockheads we look like, doctor, to have come so far on such a fool's errand!"

"Pray do not include me, my dear sir, in any such category!" cried Dr. Markham, good-humouredly. "My object will be fully answered in a pleasant journey, and a peep at the old spot where, before I became the happiest husband and person in England, I was the most contented old bachelor. Looking forward to a cheerful dinner and glass of wine with you, and beating up the quarters afterward of a few old college chums who still stick to their fellowships, I can afford latitude for my young friend's vacation rambles."

"I can't help wishing, however, that his dear good mother had contrived to get better information concerning the lad's movements, before she stimulated me to this wild-goose expedition!" was the colonel's secret but ever recurring reflection during dinner; and, deeply impressed as he was by the importance of his interposition, at such a crisis, to the happiness of the family he so dearly valued, the colonel, though cautious of avowing the extent of his uneasiness, could not altogether conceal from his companion his vexation at the disappointment. Already Dr. Markham had privately resolved to abstain from his threatened visit to St. John's, in order that the old gentleman might be comforted by his usual game at backgammon.

"I tell ye what, doctor," cried the colonel, when the waiters had delivered the travellers from their officious presence, "if it didn't very much signify to you, now you've got your furlough where you spent your leave of absence, I'd ask the favour of you to accompany me to-morrow to town (I've a vast mind for an interview with this boy before I'm a week older); and after a day or two in London, we'll back to Ovington, and surprise the good lady at the Vicarage with an account of our scapegrace exploit!"

"With all my heart—with all my heart!" replied Dr. Markham, readily conceiving that these precipitate movements had a more serious motive than the old gentleman was at liberty to avow. "I am prepared, like a faithful esquire, to follow the wanderings of my own liege knight, on condition, however, that you take a glance at King's College Chapel, and allow me one at my old shop, to-morrow, before we get into the carriage."

So reasonable a request was, of course, cheerfully acceded to, and at an earlier hour than the head-waiter judged it by any means becoming for "gemmen as travelled with four osses" to be astrir, Markham was approaching the sober-suited home of his bachelorhood, preparatory to escorting the colonel to Trinity Chapel.

To Dr. Markham, it was like pressing the hand of an old friend to pass under the venerable gateway of St. John's; and, lo! on raising his eyes towards the narrow windows of the old rooms, through which, during sixteen years of his life, he had gazed, day after day, on that uneventful quadrangle, the contrast afforded by the loneliness, cheerless gloom of the spot to his own happy, affectionate, independent home, excited such feelings of thankfulness in the heart

of the good vicar, that he was almost glad to be secure from encounter with his college friends while under their influence.

At that moment the past was revived, warm and like life around him, by the magic force of association. Not an angle of those ancient structures but had some peculiar interest in his eyes, not a tree in those college gardens but was connected with some incident of earlier years. The sound of the long-familiar bells recalled thronging thoughts and half-effaced aspirations. Echoes, long silent, were awakened in the depths of his heart. He seemed to live over again the days when his hopes of happiness were comprised in the acquiring of a modest home, over which a certain gentle Cousin Kitty was to preside, and become the mother of the olive-branches round about his table.

Heartfelt was the gratitude of the good vicar when he considered that the home, and the Cousin Kitty, and the olive-branches had been fully vouchsafed him, the prospects of his children, as well as the welfare of their parents, being secured, under the will of Providence, by the zealous aid of his friend, Hamlyn the banker.

Still overflowing with thankfulness were the good man's feelings when he rejoined Colonel Hamilton, who, having recovered, in a good night's rest, his disappointment at Henry Hamlyn's absence, was quite as ready to admire and praise as the most enthusiastic of Cantabs could desire. On emerging from the Chapel of Trinity, after a passing glance at Roubilliac's noble statue of Newton, into the imposing quadrangle, the colonel's ecstasies burst forth.

"By George! I begin to feel ashamed of all the treasons I uttered yesterday!" cried he. "Either the grave aspect of yonder solemn old dons, or the atmosphere of the place has bewitched me; for I feel disposed to recant my anticlassical heresies. In this quaint old spot, that seems proud to bear record of the greatness of the minds which, for so many centuries, have devoted themselves to study within its walls, one must not pretend to underrate the value of learning. In flashy, noisy London—amid the bustle o' business and whirl o' pleasure—one comes to fancy the gravity of philosophy all gammon. But here, it seems to attain a sort of Bible sanctity! One is forced to acknowledge that if it do not forward the labour of money-getting, or the sport of money-spending, it affords at least consolation to a solitary life. Old dunce as I am, I could find it in my heart to tin-cap, like an under-graduate, to yonder solemn old dons, who look as if nothing could move 'em that has happened on the face of the earth since the days of Herodotus."

"Yes, I remember fancying myself a prodigious philosopher so long as I was one of them!" replied the doctor.

"*Ilum non populi facies, non purpura regum
Flexit, et infans agitant discordia fratres.*"

"Though I doubt whether aught in their morning's reading pleases them as well as the last bulletin from Cabool."

Colonel Hamilton, startled by the sound of a language which had rarely greeted his ears since he left the Charter-House, now proposed that, before they quitted Trinity, they should visit the rooms of Henry Hamlyn.

"I should like to inscribe my name with his own pen on his own table!" said he, "in proof hereafter of the reality of my visit."

And, having ascertained that during their ab-

sence Johnston was to settle the inn-account and see the horses put to, Dr. Markham, well acquainted with young Hamlyn's college tutor, obtained such credentials as opened the door of his rooms. From the same respectable source, the friends of the truant were supplied, unasked, with an earnest tribute to his merits. They had the satisfaction of hearing that, with the highest distinctions of the university, young Hamlyn conciliated a larger share of its affections than is usually accorded to the pet of the bigwigs.

"Henry is a general favourite," said Dr. Markham's learned friend; "so general, that I sometimes almost wonder at the severity of his application. Even at Cambridge, as Erasmus has it—'*Non desunt crassi quidem qui stultos à libris deterreant*;' and I sometimes fear the best head in Trinity may come, like the thickest, to be broken, out of a tandem; and I confess I am as fond of my pupil as I am proud. By-and-by, when his imagination is a little sobered, and his warm-hearted enthusiasm tamed down into a more practical view of the things of this world, it will go hard but we hear of Hamlyn as one of the most distinguished men of his time. He has been a little overset by his foreign excursion. I never know what to make of my young men when they come back with their brains turned by Switzerland and the Rhine; but the brief madness usually flies off in the fumes of a few odes. They throw themselves sober again, and, after producing a new canto to Childe Harold, not quite as good as the first, fall to, as before, upon their more important studies."

After this indication to the leading fobble of poor Henry, it did not surprise either the vicar or Colonel Hamilton, on being admitted by the gyp into his rooms, to find them, in addition to their simple, solid furniture, adorned with some admirable sketches of the Abruzzi, bearing the initials of H. H., and a selection from the finer engravings of Raphael Morghen after the chef d'œuvres of the ancient masters; in place of the glaring portraits of actresses and opera-dancers constituting the usual embellishment of a young man's lodgings. On a bracket between the windows, intended to support a clock, a highly-necessary companion of a student's leisure (but which, in half the other rooms of the college, would have exhibited a statuette of Tagliani or Fanny Elsler, or, at best, of the chaster graces of Mademoiselle Rachel), stood the cast of a splendid original bust by Gibson; a female head, purporting, as announced by the crescent on its brows, to represent the severe beauty of the Goddess of Night; the "queen and huntress, chaste and fair," of Ben Jonson. On the table stood a china vase, or flower-pot, containing what, at first sight, Dr. Markham pronounced to be a stump of blacklead pencil, so slight was the trace of foliage confirming the assurance of the gyp that it was a myrtle-tree, brought with great care and trouble by Mr. Hamlyn from some famous place in foreign parts, which he had strict orders to water carefully during his absence.

"A sprig of rubbish from Virgil's tomb, or the Grotto of Egeria, I'll be bound!" cried the colonel, with a hearty laugh. "Doctor, doctor, why don't you perform your salam to so-classical a relic? Ten to one, the poor lad has got a sonnet to't in his note-book, and expects his verses and stunted laurels to flourish together. But God be gracious to me, what have we here!" cried he, a moment afterward, congratulating

himself that his rash exclamation had probably been unheard by the vicar, who was staring his eyes out at Henry's fine sketch of the ruins of Tusculum, classically explained by the gyp, watching over his shoulder, to be "Tuftus's Willow at Room."

The letter, a single glance at which had extorted so vehement an ejaculation from Colonel Hamilton, was lying unopened on Henry Hamlyn's desk, accompanied by a note or two, and a slip of paper having the appearance of a bill, all of which had evidently arrived during his absence.

With a degree of indiscretion (pardonable or unpardonable, who shall decide?), Colonel Hamilton, perceiving that the doctor was still thoroughly absorbed by a splendid print of the Transfiguration which constituted the masterwork of the Hamlyn Gallery, raised it from the desk, and deliberately examined the superscription and seal, the paper and postmark; forming inferences, perhaps, from its thickness and complexion, of the length and nature of the epistle. Nay, after laying it down once, as if he had satisfied himself fully on these points, such was the old gentleman's pertinacious interest in the correspondent of the young graduate of Trinity, that he actually took it a second time from the desk; and, after a renewed and still more careful examination, replaced it on the table.

"Of all the strange things I ever knew in this world, this is the strangest!" muttered he, when, after a liberal gratuity to the gyp, and a request that, on Mr. Hamlyn's arrival, the visit of Colonel Hamilton and Dr. Markham might be instantly announced to him, they quitted the rooms; nor could the utmost endeavours of Dr. Markham to revive his previous enthusiasm while proceeding through a hurried visit to King's College and Downing, obtain more than monosyllables from the preoccupied colonel.

So silent and mechanical were his movements, when, on reaching the Hoop, he hurried into his carriage, waiting at the door with the postboys in their saddles, that the pearly gentleman in the claret-coloured velvet girth felt convinced the brill of the preceding day had been detected, or that the charge of fifteen shillings a bottle for claret moved the old gentleman's displeasure; and, but that the waiters had the donation of Johnston safe in their pockets, they would have trembled for their half-crowns.

Dr. Markham was luckily too much absorbed by the numberless interests and associations reviving every moment around him to take heed of the colonel's absence of mind, and the carriage reached the Trumpington turnpike ere a syllable escaped his lips after the memorable exclamation betraying his discovery of some astounding mystery connected with Henry Hamlyn's correspondence. "By George! the very strangest thing in the world!" were fated to be his "few last words" in Cambridge.

CHAPTER V.

"Good-nature has an endless source of pleasure in it; and the representation of domestic life filled with its natural gratifications (instead of the vexations generally insisted upon in the writings of the witty) will be a very good office to society. It would be a lamentable thing that a man must be a philosopher to know how to pass away his time agreeably."—STEELE

"I was determined to take you by surprise,

my dear Hamlyn," cried Colonel Hamilton, as, following close the footman who announced him, and followed closely in his turn by Dr. Markham, he entered the drawing-room in Cavendish Square, at what he supposed to be a late hour for tea.

But if he had calculated on seeing an expression of joyful astonishment portray itself in the countenance of the banker, he was speedily undeceived. After a stammered greeting to two such unexpected visitors, nothing remained apparent in Hamlyn's face and deportment but an air of embarrassment and chagrin.

The tea-tray had been already removed; and, on their arrival, Hamlyn was seated in his slippers, in all the disarray of domestic ease, beside a writing-table, covered with papers, amid which stood a reflecting lamp. It was clear to the observant eye of Dr. Markham, that the banker, intently occupied in some important calculation, upon which he judged it worth while to expend his leisure hours, wished them back at Ovington, or anywhere else, a hundred miles from Cavendish Square.

It was, in fact, the good colonel himself who was most "surprised" on the occasion! For he had felt assured of finding Henry Hamlyn with his father, most likely engaged in bitter altercation; instead of which, it was clear, from the first two or three words uttered by the banker, that he was unaware of his younger son being in town.

"Whom did you expect to find with me, my dear colonel, that you appear so astonished at my being alone?" said Hamlyn. "Believe me, so long as my family remains at Dean, I am quite as great a solitary in town as you at Buntingford. Between the sporting turn of Walter and the studious turn of Harry, I am as much left to myself as though I had not a son to call my own!"

Luckily, the colonel had forewarned Dr. Markham that, on account of a disagreement in the Hamlyn family, no allusion must be made to his proposed visit to Henry Hamlyn.

"I'm not fond of mysteries and concealments, my dear doctor," said he. "But between ourselves, it may enable me to serve all parties with a surer chance, if we say nothing at present of our little madcap trip to Cambridge. Luckily, poor Hamlyn is not given to asking idle questions, like that burly baronet of a brother-in-law at the Hyde. He'll take our journey as a matter of course. For I told him afore he left Warwickshire I must be up in town shortly, to look out for my daughter-in-law's arrival. So, if you love me, not a syllable in allusion to poor Harry!"

This prohibition having been enforced anew by a significant look, on learning from Hamlyn's grave announcement that his son was "reading hard at Cambridge," the vicar was not a little amused at the bungling efforts made by so poor a dissembler as the colonel to conceal that they had reached London by the northern instead of the western road.

Still, old Hamilton might have blundered and blundered on, without attracting the notice of his companion. For the greater the efforts of Hamlyn to talk chattily and do the honours of the tea-table, already replenished, the plainer it became, from sundry glances at his writing-table covered with papers, that his mind was ever and anon reverting to the occupation from which he had been disturbed by his friends.

"I conclude you have not yet had time since your arrival," observed the host, with a vagueness of eye that must have struck a more perceptive man than Hamilton, "to make inquiries concerning Mrs. Robert's arrival?"

"Faith, I scarcely know *where* to make 'em, till I obtain the information from you," replied the colonel.

"From me? I thought you were in frequent correspondence. I have not had the smallest communication with her (except the formal noting and payment of her jointure through the banking-house) for the last two years."

"I know it, I know it! Her last letter to me was dated from Florence, and told me I might look out for her about the middle of January. The middle will probably turn out the end. No woman with a journey of a thousand miles afore her was ever punctual to a week or so. But Ellen never told me what hotel she should stop at in her way through town."

"Hamilton seems to take me for a conjurer, and fancy I have the art of divining people's intentions?" said Hamlyn, addressing Dr. Markham, as if suddenly afraid of appearing to neglect his humbler guest; but, in reality, to distract the observant eye of the vicar from some object on which it appeared to settle near the writing-table.

"Don't flatter yourself! I don't think you a greater conjurer than myself, unless where scrip and omatum are concerned. I simply fancied you might be able to tell me to what hotel Lady Burlington was in the habit of resorting?"

"Lady Burlington? I thought you were talking of Mrs. Robert Hamilton?" interposed Dr. Markham, with a puzzled air.

"And so I am! They've been travelling together in Italy. When Ellen came down to visit you at Dean Park, my dear Hamlyn, on her marriage, she made acquaintance, it seems, with Lady Burlington; and meeting together thus strangely in a foreign country, already widows, and, as it were, in exile, they nat'rally struck up a friendship, poor things!"

Mr. Hamlyn appeared disagreeably startled by this explanation.

"It is therefore more than probable," pursued the colonel, "that Ellen, who knows little or nothing of London, will profit by her friend's experience about such a matter as the choice of a hotel."

"Likely enough!" observed Dr. Markham, seeing that Hamlyn was unprepared to reply.

"And Lady Burlington, if I remember, always went to Mivart's. In Sir Roger's time, at least, I am *certain* they frequented Mivart's; for I well remember seeing them start from thence one morning for Ascot races; and I, who knew something of the entanglement of their affairs, could not help feeling sore at heart as I stood watching their showy four-in-hand turn the corner of Grosvenor Square."

"It is a most extraordinary thing that he should never have mentioned to me having made her acquaintance!" cried Hamlyn, after some minutes' silence, as if musing aloud.

"Who? Markham? Why, surely, you must have known pretty well the degree of acquaintance that subsisted between Overton Vicarage and Burlington Manor?" cried Colonel Hamilton, becoming alive to the absent, hurried manner of his friend.

"I—I was talking of—"

"I think you scarcely know *what* you're talk-

ing of, my dear fellow!" cried the colonel, slapping him on the back. "Were you o' Watty's age, I can tell you, I should fancy you were over head and ears in love!"

"I was talking of my son Henry and your daughter-in-law," said Hamlyn, stoutly, thinking it more prudent to speak out than incur the suspicion, in Colonel Hamilton's mind, of being a musing visionary. "I was expressing my surprise that my son should never have alluded to having met Mrs. Robert Hamilton in Italy."

"And how the plague d'ye know they *did* meet?" cried the colonel, on *this* point almost as curious as his friend.

"Because Henry spent some time in company with Lady Burlington. He brought me letters from her, and papers of consequence. But though, ere he hurried to Cambridge for the commencement of term, he spent a day with me here in town, alone, and freely discussing all the occurrences of his tour, I am certain, *quite certain*, he never hazarded the remotest allusion to a person so peculiarly interesting to the feelings of us all—as—Mrs. Robert Hamilton."

"There's no accounting for the mysteries of young folks; or, rather, what they may or may not think worth mentioning. As Harry knew you'd not, in the first instance, shown yourself mighty partial to my poor daughter-in-law, he might fancy you did not care to hear of her intimacy with your friend Lady Burlington; or, maybe, to hear of her at all!"

"Still, a person so singularly beautiful and accomplished as Mrs. Robert cannot but have attracted the greatest attention abroad; and it would have been only natural to say how he found her looking, and whether as much admired as we suppose."

"She is strikingly beautiful, eh?" cried Hamilton. "How the deuce, then, came you to be always so indignant at what you called Bob's infatuation?"

"I might think her singularly lovely, yet an imprudent match for a young man of poor Robert's brilliant prospects."

"You're queer fishes, vastly queer fishes, you money-spinners!" cried Colonel Hamilton, almost pettishly. "You seem to think there's nothing better to be bought with money *than* money! What the plague could my poor boy get better, in exchange for his heirship to fifteen thousand a year, than a pretty young wife? However, we won't fight that battle over again, the only point ever in dispute between us! And since you say Mivart's is the place, we'll go and look after Ellen to-morrow morning, doctor, if you've no objection."

After a few inquiries on Hamilton's part about the party at Rotherwood Castle, and the health of the Marchioness of Dartford, purporting to change the conversation, and a little parish gossip between the banker and the vicar, the visitors re-entered their hackney-coach, and returned to Fenton's Hotel, to sleep soundly after three days of exertion so unusual in the even tenour of their sober lives.

But the sleep of the banker was fated to be less easy. His heart was disquieted within him. By nature mistrustful, and his mistrusts aggravated at times to torture by the consciousness of a load of concealments, new anxieties had been created in his mind by the sudden discovery of this unsuspected intimacy between the two women he liked least on earth.

Richard Hamlyn, whatever else might be his

weaknesses, had, it must be admitted, little leaning towards the gentler sex. A harassed, anxious life either inclines a man to put unlimited trust in the virtues of women, and derive his chief solace from their affectionate companionship, or to endure them as an inevitable encumbrance. Hamlyn, such was his austere nature, had adopted the latter alternative. Instead of reverencing the meek submission of his wife, he regarded her as an obstacle which he had conquered. Incapable of appreciating the greatness of her self-abnegation, he estimated her as merely one of the passive portions of his social existence. But Lady Burlington and Mrs. Robert Hamilton had thwarted his purposes; and these two women he loathed—*yes, loathed*—in spite of the “baited breath and whispering humbleness” with which, in their enforced intercourse, he was in the habit of accosting them.

Nevertheless, the widow of Sir Roger Burlington, young, fair, gentle, was a singular object for antipathy! It was scarcely possible to see a sweeter, more timid, or more feminine woman. Infirm of health, still more infirm of purpose, she was naturally at the disposal of those surrounding her who chose to be at the trouble of regulating her movements. But as the dove, in the exercise of its domestic functions, is said to acquire the ferocity of the eagle, as a wife and mother, a bereaved wife and anxious mother, Lady Burlington had assumed sufficient courage to defend the rights and interests of her only child from the somewhat arbitrary disposal of the banker; and, unused to opposition, least of all from a woman, Hamlyn had no patience with the fair and fragile-looking thing in its widow's cap and weeds, that presumed to have a will of its own touching the sale of an estate or paying off of a mortgage. Business was to *him* too solemn and peremptory a matter for a hand so slight and fair as Lady Burlington's to dare extend itself towards the ark of the covenant.

The “beautiful Ellen” was the very reverse of all this; and if in his soul he despised the gentle lady of Burlington Manor, the soul of the banker sank rebuked under the penetrating eye of Bob Hamilton's widow. He was positively afraid of her. She was the Ellen Somerton he had persecuted, the Ellen Somerton he had injured; and she was also the Mrs. Robert Hamilton who might injure and persecute *him* in return. He had bruised her head; he felt that she might still bruise his heel.

For there was the spirit of no ordinary character in Ellen Hamilton; so for the future let us name the fair widow, who, even now, had not completed her twenty-second year. Accomplished in mind as she was beautiful in person, she exhibited a striking instance of the equalizing justice of Providence; for with these rare endowments, she united no favour of fortune. Ellen was the only child of her mother, and *she* was a widow—the widow of a naval officer of modest connexions, who had bequeathed nothing besides his small pension for the maintenance of their child. The rare beauty and still rarer intelligence and self-possession of her daughter served at once to obviate the evils of such a position, and render them harder to be borne. Ellen had high courage; Ellen had a devoted heart; and, from the moment she became aware of the cause of her poor mother's privations, resolved to work for her independence. But *how* is a young girl to achieve “independence” by her own labours? As a seamstress, by which,

with assiduous application, she may obtain a shilling a day? As a fritterer of fancy articles, the sale of which (except in novels) is so precarious? As a teacher of music, as a nursery governess? Alas! for these latter vocations recommendations must be procured; and even had they been forthcoming, at sixteen Ellen Somerton was so eminently beautiful, that any duty requiring her transit through the open street was a service of danger as well as of humiliation.

With features delicately chiselled as those of some Grecian muse, she united a clear olive complexion that might have been deemed too brown, but for the darkness of her raven hair and finely-marked eyebrows; but, above all, for the onyx-like hue of those expressive eyes, which, depressed by a sense of early affliction, were habitually fixed upon the ground. But when she *did* condescend to raise them, and fix her looks upon the people with whom she was conversing, what depth of expression! Whether tenderness or thankfulness gleamed from their olive depths, or the sternness of scorn were enhanced by the contemptuous arching of her upper lip, the person who had ever glowed with affection or writhed with shame under the searching glances of Ellen, felt that the influence of that potent sentiment was to abide for evermore!

Had such charms and qualifications existed in combination with birth and fortune, poor Ellen would have been pronounced the most beautiful woman of the day. Her portrait would have figured in exhibitions and annuals; and the likeness of her finely-developed form attracted crowds to the print-shop windows. But in humbler life, such beauty becomes an object of mistrust. Ellen was far too handsome for a governess, far too handsome for a teacher. Again and again, with her mother's sanction, she had attempted to obtain such an employment. Impossible! The cautious or prudish were afraid to embarrass themselves with so beautiful an inmate as Ellen Somerton. One had a brother—one a son—one a husband. Not a woman of them all was to be persuaded!

Time, as it passed on, did but aggravate the evil. But while it perfected the charms, it served also to strengthen the mind and stimulate the courage of the unfortunate girl. The widow and her daughter, too poorly off to reside in the metropolis, had retired to York, where they boarded in the house of a maiden lady, an infirm relative of the deceased Captain Somerton; and there it happened that the accidental perusal of some dramatic memoirs revealing the prodigious fortunes to be acquired by the aid of genius and steadiness on the English stage, fell into the hands of the girl who saw her mother languishing amid the bitter struggles of poverty.

“And why should not I, too, be an actress?” said she, in the earnestness of her heart and consciousness of her genius. “The stage does not necessarily convey degradation! Women have risen to the height of their profession without forfeiting the esteem of society. Why might not I, too, become a Mrs. Siddons—a Miss O'Neill?”

Without consulting her mother, whose susceptibility as a woman, or, rather, as an officer's widow, would, she knew, rebel against such a proposition, Ellen Somerton accordingly set about diligently studying for the stage. Already familiar with the spirit of our great dramatist, she made herself mistress of the leading parts in

Shakspeare's plays; and Juliet became once more exquisitely revived by the rich tones of her youthful voice, and the graceful attitudes of one of the finest of human forms. All she awaited for the accomplishment of her project was the arrival at York of one of the most eminent actresses of one of the winter theatres—a woman equally esteemed for her respectability in private life, and her more than respectability on the boards; who was engaged for a few nights' representation on her way to Edinburgh. To her Ellen had resolved to apply for advice and instruction, looking hopefully forward to the means of independence for herself and competence for the declining years of the kindest of mothers; a consideration sufficient to alleviate all that was painful to her feelings in the projected sacrifice.

It was at this crisis she became accidentally acquainted with Robert Hamilton, who was quartered with his regiment at York. On her way home from the lodgings of Mrs. —, still excited by the impersonification she had been exhibiting to the astonishment and applause of the practised London actress, who did not hesitate to predict miracles of fame and fortune to the delighted Ellen, she was followed by two officers; nor did her modest demeanour serve as a security against the compliments usually paid under such circumstances to a beautiful girl, emerging, unprotected, from the lodgings of an actress.

Ellen Somerton was sufficiently mistress of herself to express her contemptuous disgust at this ungentlemanly intrusion; and young Hamilton, luckily, of a turn of mind to be only the farther prepossessed by the rebuke of the indignant beauty. With some difficulty, he shortly afterward obtained an introduction to her mother, and was permitted to visit at the house. With greater difficulty still, his devoted attachment found favour in the sight of Ellen, to whose pronounced character, his timid nature and extreme youth were grievous disqualifications. For the rash lover had not yet attained his majority; and nearly a year must elapse before he could obtain such a sanction from his father as might entitle him to demand her hand.

During the lapse of that year, however, the constancy of Robert Hamilton's attentions, and the gentle submission with which he accommodated himself to the exactions of her mother's humble fireside, wrought all the effect he could have desired upon the proud heart of Ellen Somerton. Regardless of the superiority of his prospects or position, she became warmly attached to him; and, when the period approached for the arrival of Colonel Hamilton's answer to his son's application, was almost as nervous and anxious as the devoted lover.

That answer, however, imposed farther suspense. Colonel Hamilton judiciously pronounced that his son was too young to know his own mind—too young to marry; and addressed, at the same time, a private commission to his correspondent, Hamlyn the banker, to inquire especially into the connexions, situation, and conduct of a certain Mrs. Somerton and her daughter, the widow and daughter of a captain in the navy, residing in reduced circumstances at York.

By a singular stroke of ill-fortune, the lady to whom Ellen had applied the preceding year for professional advice, with a full disclosure of her poverty and plans, conceived herself to be rendering a service to her interesting *protégée* by announcing, on her return to town, the existence of a theatrical phoenix in the provinces, who was

likely to restore to the theatres all that fashionable vogue admitted to have been withdrawn from the time a first-rate actress was wanting on the boards. The rumours of what are called the "theatrical circles" have usually their echoes in the public press; and the consequence was that, before the project of poor Ellen was developed, even to her mother, the Sunday papers, whenever in want of a paragraph for their theatrical articles, indulged in predictions concerning the unparalleled Juliet—the new Phoenix—the beautiful Miss Ellen Somerton, of York!

What a discovery for Richard Hamlyn! He, who had fixed his heart upon keeping single and heirless the only surviving and sickly son of his wealthy client at Ghazera, whose softness of nature was sufficiently revealed in his open-hearted correspondence, instead of making the inquiries demanded of him, did not hesitate to describe the threatened daughter-in-law as neither more nor less than "a country actress!"

"A COUNTRY ACTRESS! A thing of rouge and rant—spangles and false ringlets, the *protégée* of the barracks—some artful baggage who had enthralled the feelings of an inexperienced lad of twenty-one!" No wonder that such a picture should rouse even the unready ire of the merciful colonel. Now under the mere idea of such a daughter should produce the angry prohibition, nay, the threatened malediction of old John Hamilton. For the first time in his life, he expressed himself bitterly and unfairly in his letter of refusal to his son!

Long before that letter reached England, the interference of Robert Hamilton had obtained a public contradiction of the announcement of the appearance of the new Juliet. But the mischief was done. After nearly two years of suspense patiently endured by all parties, after the heroic submission of that humble domestic circle, came this cruelty, this insult, this sentence of death!

For a sentence of death it proved to more than one of the parties interested in Colonel Hamilton's decision. The high-minded mother, from whom Ellen and her plighted lover had managed to conceal the reports in question, ignorant till that moment of a project frustrated by the altered prospects of the family, a project which her own greater experience of the world would have forbidden her to sanction, sank under the influence of Colonel Hamilton's humiliating insinuations. Had poor Ellen *really* become an actress, the power of genius, the meed of public approbation, would, perhaps, have sanctified the calling in the eyes of her mother. But the stigma was conveyed without its extenuation. The bane had no assuaging antidote. Ellen, her pure, virtuous, gifted, dutiful, spotless Ellen, was branded as the "*protégée* of the barracks;" and the poor woman, long harassed by anxiety, poverty, and care, laid her head on the pillow of sickness after perusing that bitter letter, and never raised it again. Her next resting-place was the grave.

By the indiscreet frankness of Colonel Hamilton, the source of his injurious information had been suffered to transpire in his letter to his son; and the remonstrances addressed to Richard Hamlyn by the aggrieved orphan were such as might be supposed to flow from the pen of a woman injured in the dearest points of her sex's sensibilities. Abstaining from all bitterness, all invective, she calmly laid before him the sufferings of her mother's life, the fortitude of her

mother's character, the wretchedness of her mother's end; and then bade him search his heart for vindication of the murder he had committed.

Every compensation was offered by Robert Hamilton in his power to bestow. Having in the interim attained his majority, he was eager to make the calumniated orphan his wife, and share with her the liberal allowance made him by his father. But this was firmly refused by the high-minded girl. She would not force her way into the family by which she had been so ignominiously rejected.

She wrote, however, to Colonel Hamilton. In defence of her own and her poor mother's character, she laid before him an explicit account of the circumstances of her unhappy fortunes; and even obtained an attestation from the clergyman who had officiated at her mother's deathbed, and assisted them for the last fifteen years in their diligent observance of the duties of the Protestant communion. The pious man who had prepared her for confirmation, and bestowed on Mrs. Somerton the last consolations of religion, warmly and indignantly resented the accusations of the banker; declaring his young charge to be not only irreproachable as one of his own children, but exemplary in all the relations of life.

Till the answer to this communication should arrive, Ellen steadily declined even a friendly intercourse with Robert Hamilton. Maintaining herself by the labours of her needle, in addition to the scanty pension allotted to the sailor's orphan, she persevered patiently and courageously in her determination. And verily she had her reward; for when, at length, the answer of Colonel Hamilton arrived from Ghazrapore, it was that of a "father who pitieth his own children." It conveyed happiness, comfort, independence, wealth; it conveyed all she could desire save what was gone forever—the tender mother she had lost—the broken constitution of her affianced husband.

The happiness of the young couple was, however, for a time sufficing. The good pastor, who had stood the friend of poor Ellen in her adversity, gave her away; and Robert, who, from the delicacy of his health, had been forced to quit the army, proposed that they should pass their first winter in Italy.

As yet unaware of the fatal presentiments by which the proposition was suggested, the happy bride prepared herself to enjoy, beyond all her early dreams of earthly enjoyment, the beauty of the loveliest country under the sun, hand in hand with the dearest and most devoted of human beings; and, already surrounded by the luxurious comfort secured by the liberality of the good colonel, they were preparing for immediate departure, when Robert Hamilton, after due appeal to her indulgence, hazarded an earnest petition.

On the strength of the remonstrances forwarded to England by Colonel Hamilton, the repentant banker, in despair either at the result of his rash slander, or at having risked the displeasure of his valued client, had thrown himself without reserve on the forbearance of the young couple; offered the most plausible explanations of his error, and appealed so forcibly to the feelings of Robert as his father's friend, and the kindly fosterer of his boyhood, that young Hamilton, secretly conscious of his approaching end, and desirous to exercise the last act in his power of Christian forbearance, not only forgave his enemy, but obtained from the reluctant Ellen

her consent to pass a few days, preparatory to leaving England forever, with the banker's family at Dean Park.

Once there, Richard Hamlyn spared no humbleness of adulation to obtain forgiveness of his fault. Already, he had despatched to Ghazrapore an account of his promptitude of atonement; and it must be admitted that he completed his sacrifice of expiation by rendering every word he addressed to Mrs. Robert Hamilton, while under his roof, an effort of self-abasement.

But while Ellen recognised with admiration the gentle, self-controlling virtues of the banker's wife, and, in deference to these, suppressed all betrayal of hatred and disgust towards the husband, Richard Hamlyn was painfully conscious that he had effected nothing towards the obliteration of the uncharitable feelings his malice had created. He saw that in Ellen Hamilton he had an enemy for life; that between him and her, as regarded the favour of her father-in-law, there would be perpetual warfare; and when, within a year from his marriage, tidings reached England from Naples of the untimely death of the young husband, the banker foresaw that his grasp upon the coveted inheritance of his friend the nabob, though strengthened by the event, might still be baffled by the influence of the beautiful widow.

Her apparent indifference to pecuniary advantage afforded his sole consolation. Of Colonel Hamilton's arrival in England, his daughter-in-law, so far from hastening to profit by the offers of a home he instantly vouchsafed her, kept aloof; as if unconscious or careless of her power to become the heiress of three hundred and forty-two thousand pounds!

On a sudden, however, after the lapse of more than a year, her return to England was announced; announced, too, at a moment when her presence portended peculiar defeat to the plottings of the banker. Having located himself in peace and quietness for the remainder of his days, the colonel, as became his advanced age, began to talk of making his will. His WILL! a will disposing of nearly three hundred and fifty thousand pounds; a sum involving the happiness, credit, honour, solvency of Hamlyn and Co.!

In the present crisis of his affairs, two things appeared essential to accomplish the defeated projects of Richard Hamlyn's care-worn life; first, that one of his family should be ready to succeed him in his business, and become the depository of its mysteries and conservator of its fortunes; and, secondly, that the property of Colonel Hamilton should be secured to him as head of the firm. If, indeed, his hopes of direct inheritance were to be frustrated by the ill-omened arrival of the widow, her marriage with his son Walter, seemed to present the sole alternative. But what was to be hoped, if all her former aversion to the Hamlyn family had been recently renewed by a sudden intimacy with Lady Burlington, to whom he knew himself to be an object of suspicion and dislike?

But worse than all—far, far worse, and more perplexing than all—was the surmise recently suggested by Colonel Hamilton, that, during Henry's visit to Italy, his son might have become intimate with this dangerous pair, and unconsciously imbibed their sentiments of mistrust. Was not this a sufficient explanation of the sudden aversion conceived by Harry for the career he had been previously satisfied

brace? How otherwise, indeed, could he account for the precipitate change of sentiments announced to him by his wife on the part of the refractory young man, in his recent visit to Dean Park; the cause of so much conjugal irritation, as well as the origin of his singular self-betrayal to his favourite son?

Richard Hamlyn was, as the experienced reader has long ago discovered, a systematic dissembler. He was one of those who not only "let not their right hand know what their left doeth," but was in league with his left hand to deceive and defraud his right. His whole life was a system of semblance—of careful and consistent deceit. For his interests' sake, having once launched upon the sea of imposture, he was unable to recede from acts of dissimulation towards his customers and mercantile associates. But the deception in which he persevered for the gratification of his personal feelings, was the attitude he assumed towards his family. The only thing he cared for in public life was to be cited as Hamlyn the great banker—son of Hamlyn the great banker—head of one of the most substantial firms in the city. The only thing he desired in private, was to appear before his sons as the most upright and honourable of the human race—a conscientious man of business—a disinterested politician—a virtuous citizen—a benevolent Christian—a great and good man. He cared as much for *this* as others more deeply imbued with a sense of moral responsibility—others with a more deep-felt awe of the terrors of eternal punishment—care for the exercise of those very virtues of which *he* ambitioned the pretence.

Some excuse may be offered for this infatuation. There is an exquisite charm in filial tenderness, to which many a nature inaccessible to every other species of human affection is open at every pore. The love of a young child for its parents—the trustful, uninquiring, pious love that can neither imagine a fault nor resent an injustice—approaches nearest to the expansion of adoration we render to the Supreme Being; and to those who have suffered under the aspersions of the world, or been wounded by the scorn of their fellow-creatures, this unwonted tenderness conveys a balm, devised, as if by the express mercy of God, for the healing of their souls. While others mistrust, the confiding child has faith as in the stability of Heaven. While others disdain, the grateful child preserves its attitude of kneeling submission. The criminal, who goes to his death with the certainty that the faith of his children in his innocence is unshaken, loses half the anguish of the gallows.

By the same rule, the apprehension of a conscious falter in the path of rectitude that rumours of his errors will reach the ears of his children—that their suspicions, like those of the world, will be awakened; that the eye in which he has been accustomed to read the fulness of love and faith will become averted like the rest; that the fond pressure of the hand will be qualified, the kiss embittered, the warm, warm, trusting, heart-felt, soul-felt, filial embrace delayed—is, of all the punishments of human frailty, the hardest to be borne.

Such was the apprehension which caused Richard Hamlyn to pace with perturbed steps the noble proportions of his handsome drawing-room, shuffle his unexamined papers together, replace them peevishly in his secretaire, and re-

treat to his anxious pillow with even a heavier pressure than usual upon his heart.

Long as had been his career of worldly anxiety, acute as was on many occasions the agony of his fears, he began to feel that the shame of a public bankruptcy were trivial compared with having to stand in presence of his gentlemanly sons, as one whose honour and honesty have given way amid the struggles which only serve to strengthen the courage and steadfastness of genuine worth.

No rest that night for the throbbing head of Hamlyn the banker!

CHAPTER XIII.

"As great and exalted spirits undertake the pursuit of hazardous actions for the good of others, gratifying at the same time their own passion for glory, so do worthy minds in the domestic way of life, undervaluing the ordinary gratifications of wealth, exercise the great civil virtue of self-denial for the comfort of others. Such natures one may call the stores of Providence; for they are actuated by a secret celestial influence."—ADDISON.

THOUGH Colonel Hamilton was considerably vexed by the thwarting of his projects in Henry Hamlyn's favour through his mysterious absence from Cambridge and London, the sanguine tone of the old gentleman's mind was such as to prevent all pondering over his vexations. In the lesser as in the great events of life, his general principle, that "whatever is, is right," reconciled him to his infructuous journey of three hundred miles.

"No doubt," said he, as he sat discussing an oyster-omelet for breakfast with the good vicar, the following morning, "no doubt the stupid gyp, or your friend, the learned Pandit of a tutor, made a mistake. 'Twas to Dean Park, not to Lon'on, the boy was going. However, here we are; and though we've been misled a bit in our calculations, no need to make bad worse by not taking 'the goods the gods provide us,' and enjoying ourselves when we're in the way of enjoyment."

Dr. Markham, already somewhat discountenanced by the brilliancy and bustle of St. James's-street, felt almost alarmed at the growing spirits of the joyous veteran. But there was no help for it, during their sojourn in the metropolis, but to follow the guidance of his merry leader.

"By George! you shall come with me after breakfast, doctor, and visit the museum of our club," cried he. "Then, after we've skimmed the morning papers, we'll have a peep into the Practical Science concern, and you can have your very long face daguerreotyped, to take back to your good little wife. After that, we'll look in at Hatchard's, and see what they've got new on the counter; and, by-the-way, those patent ventilators that the Sir Pompous, at Lord Vernon's, was prosing about, and which I thought would be such an improvement for the Ovington workhouse—they're sold somewhere in the Strand, I think? The first hackney-coachman 'll show us the way; for in Lon'on, wisdom cries aloud in the streets. So on with your great-coat, my dear doctor, and let's be stirring."

At that moment the Colonel was unusually in conceit with "Lon'on," for it was no longer the dreary Lon'on of Portland Place or Cavendish Square. He was now in the centre of stir, bustle, movement—trade, throbbing with all its arteries—pleasure, giggling with all her coquetries. Such a "Lon'on" as St. James's-street

presented at that moment was, for a time, exciting enough.

"There must surely be something unusual going on this morning?" said Dr. Markham, when, having turned the angle of St. James's-street, Pall Mall lay before them, enlivened by its bustle of intermingling palaces and exhibition-rooms, auctions and public offices, with all the motley array of lounging guardsmen and rigid sentries; to say nothing of the luxury of wealth or wealth of luxury in the shop-windows, gorgeous jewels, glittering clocks, shapely china, brilliant glass, noble engravings and costly furniture, besides a rainbow variegation of silk, satin, and brocade. The eyes of the rustics were almost dazzled as they mingled with the throng of well-dressed people hurrying joyously along the pavement on either side.

"Don't talk so confoundedly like a country put!" cried the colonel, in reply. "You remind me of the Yorkshireman in the story, who stood aside all day long in the Strand to let the crowd go by. Recollect you're not on Ovington cause-way, man, and pluck up your spirits."

His sense of the superior rusticity of the vicar inspired him, in short, with all the sauciness of a practised cockney. Nevertheless, by the time they reached the bottom of Waterloo Place, the colonel himself was struck by the unusual hurry of the streets.

"Here's what the Lon'oners have the priggism to call their modern Athens!" said he, pointing out the Carlton quarter to the admiration of the vicar, who stood transfixed and wondering, much as the colonel himself had done in the centre of the Trinity quadrangle the preceding day. "All pasteboard and stucco! all sham and show! though an improvement, certainly, on the old brick walls, pierced with windows, we used to call streets! These clubs, these joint stock society-companies, as I call 'em, are a mighty addition, aren't they, to the splendours of the town? They gave the example of improvement, I'm told, in domestic architecture. 'Twas only by force of public subscription people found out they could afford to have brackets to their windows, and columns to their doors. Some day or other, let's hope the Carlton will be rich enough to build itself a marble palace, like the one they tell of at Petersburg, or 't'other that's stopped short at its second story, in the tarnation grand city of Washington. The Reform Club's a fine thing, if 'twere not for its little pig-eyed windows, though even those, the judges tell me, are according to book. Is anything out of the way going on this morning, pray?" demanded the colonel, in his turn, suddenly addressing a waiter, standing on the steps of the United Service Club, to whom he was known.

"Nothing, sir, that I'm aware of, besides the meeting of Parliament," replied the man, taking his hands out of his pockets in deference to the gray hairs and soldierly demeanour of the veteran, who, heedless of his respect or disrespect, and exclaiming, "Gad, my dear doctor, what a couple of famous old blockheads we are to have forgotten that the eighteenth was the meeting of Parliament!" pushed onward with the unresisting vicar towards the more densely-crowded neighbourhood of Charing Cross. The bells of St. Martin's Church were ringing merrily, its flag was hoisted, a troop of life-guardsmen was arriving, and a detachment of police had already arrived to regulate the movements of the throng; while at the top of Cockspur-street, inspectors

were stationed to decide on the exhibition of tickets, what aristocratic equipages were to pass down Whitehall, to deposit their inmates at the door of the House of Lords, and what carriages to be sent sneaking round to Westminster, by the Strand and Waterloo Bridge.

"We're in luck, my dear Markham! we're in famous luck!" exclaimed the colonel, now more than ever satisfied that, notwithstanding his disappointment about Harry, all was for the best. "A fine story you'll have to tell when you get back to the Vicarage, that we saw the queen, and court, and ministers, to say nothing of the great lords and pretty ladies, and all without being a pinch of snuff the worse for it, or putting ourselves a step out of the way."

Brilliant equipages, crowded with officers in uniform, or lovely women in full array of feathers and diamonds, were in fact every moment glancing past, on their way to the House of Lords; while the windows and balconies of the houses in Whitehall and Parliament-street were thronged with well-dressed spectators, on the look-out for the royal procession. Though the gorgeous Life Guards were active in keeping the streets, it was difficult to restrain within due bounds the eager crowds pushing their way towards Westminster, in the hopes of securing a view of the annual show.

"Let us station ourselves hereabout," said the colonel, immediately after passing the Horse Guards; "from hence we shall have a capital view of the pageant."

But for the mere pageant the good vicar avowed little interest.

"A state coach," said he, "is, after all, but a piece of gilt gingerbread; a cumbrous, tawdry affair, fit only to figure as a frontispiece to a child's story-book. But I own I rejoice in the opportunity of obtaining a glimpse of the queen."

"What the deuce! you don't mean to say that you've never seen her?" cried the colonel, in delighted surprise.

"This is my first visit to London these seven years."

"Then, by George! I'd have travelled three times three hundred miles, and welcome, to afford you the pleasure," added the colonel. "I hope I've been a loyal man all my life, and prayed heartily for those that were put in authority over me. I was thankful to King George, in whose time the French were so preciously beaten; and thankful to King William, for granting us the blessing of Reform. But I never understood the real thrill and glow of loyalty to my sovereign, doctor, till I found myself in the presence of that fair young creature, and felt that I, a gray-haired man, shrunk to nothing in her presence. Blessings be upon her, say I, doctor; blessings be upon her! Till she was married, I felt somehow as though 'twere a daughter of my own; and I'll be bound, if they'd own it, half the pottering old blockheads in England experienced the same! And now she's a wife and mother, I don't love her the less, because I respect her the more! Gad! I'm gladder than I can say, doctor, that you'll be treated with a look at the queen."

At that moment the discharge of the Park guns announced the departure of the royal cortege from the palace, and the bells of St. Margaret's chimed out a merry peal. Again a few minutes, and the cheers of the populace in the Park became audible in the distance; gradually

augmenting, till vehement shouts and loud huzzas, overpowering the trampling of the horses that formed the royal escort, announced that her majesty was at hand, on her way to open in person the session of Parliament so momentous to the welfare of the realm.

Unaccustomed to the throng of cities, Dr. Markham felt almost dizzy under the pressure of that tumultuous assemblage; the sea of faces beating up against him, the roar, as of its surges, deafening his ears. His feelings were overpowered. While Hamilton was elated with a degree of joy, rivalling almost that of the boys clambering upon the lamp-posts to command a view of the procession, the vicar felt that he had scarcely voice to shout among the rest, "Long live the queen!"

Already uproarious cries to that effect resounded on all sides. Already the leaders of the state-horses, with their gorgeous housings of crimson, were in sight, emerging from the gateway of the Horse Guards—when Colonel Hamilton was suddenly startled by an exclamation from his companion of, "As I live, there is Henry Hamlyn!"

"Where? where?" cried the colonel, instantly preparing to join him, though the dense pressure of the crowd must have prevented him from stirring an inch.

"In yonder carriage; the shabby yellow chariot stationed on the opposite side of the gateway!" said Dr. Markham, pointing to one in a knot of carriages which, as usual on such occasions, had straggled to the scene of action through the oversight of the police, either at Charing Cross or Westminster; and, though buffeted by inspectors and reviled by the officer on duty, contrived to stand their ground. The one pointed out by Dr. Markham appeared to have become unintentionally hemmed in; for the young man whom he asserted to be Henry Hamlyn was at that moment engaged in altercation with the police, entreating an order to pass, and escape from the file.

"As if they'd allow e'er a carriage to move, just as the percession is going by!" was the observation of several persons in Colonel Hamilton's neighbourhood, who had noticed the young man's appeal. "There the carriage must stick till the queen has reached the Parliament House, and no mistake!"

Secure at last of finding his young friend, the colonel allowed his whole attention to be engrossed by the pageant; nor did the deafening cries that now rent the air leave him much leisure for reflection. Among the hearts throbbing around him at that moment with the excitement of the scene, no two, perhaps, were more fervently inspired by genuine warmth of loyalty, than Colonel Hamilton and the worthy doctor.

"And now," cried the former, the moment the trampling escort of Life Guards, closing the procession, had passed on ward towards Whitehall—"and now for this scapegrace, Master Harry!"

But the group of carriages, again visible in consequence of the disappearance of the intervening objects, had shifted its juxtaposition. A hackney-coach now occupied the station taken up before by the yellow carriage; and a butlerman's cart was the next vehicle in sight. Carriages there were in abundance: green, chocolate-coloured, crimson, blue, and yellow—but not the yellow—not the shabby-genteel equipage containing the object of his search.

"By George! I do believe the fellow's again

escaped me!" cried Colonel Hamilton, in a pet.

"I fear, indeed, that we have lost sight of him," replied the vicar, obeying the impulsion of his companion, and following the stream of idlers moving towards Cockspur-street. "We are scarcely likely to come up again with the yellow carriage!"

"Who the deuce was the scapegrace with?" resumed Colonel Hamilton. "Did you notice, doctor, who were his companions?"

"Two ladies in deep mourning."

"What! a lady with a remarkably fine cast of countenance, in a black velvet bonnet?" persisted the colonel.

"Precisely."

"I noticed her as the carriage passed us to take up its position, but without at all suspecting that the young fellow in her company was Hamlyn's son. At that time I might almost have laid my hand upon his coat-sleeve! By George! it is too provoking."

To give a new turn to the colonel's ideas, Dr. Markham proposed that they should now proceed to Mivart's, to inquire for Mrs. Robert Hamilton. But the colonel had already despatched Johnston thither on a similar errand, who brought back the unsatisfactory answer that no lady of that name was either there, or expected.

Still, there was no occasion for despondency. The two far from uncongenial companions contrived to spend the morning in a succession of interesting visits and surveys; and, as Dr. Markham was desirous of passing the remainder of the day with a sister of his wife, settled in the neighbourhood of Russell Square, to whom he had already intimated his arrival in town, Colonel Hamilton dined at his club, and had the satisfaction to perceive that its ultra-Oriental cuisine was unequal to the production of a prawn-curry, rivalling that of Goody Johnston!

"See here, my dear doctor—I entreat of you just look at my luck!" cried he, when Dr. Markham made his appearance at the breakfast-table the following morning. "Cast your eyes upon this deuce of a Morning Post!"

"News of Mr. Henry Hamlyn?" demanded the vicar, taking the paper into his hand, and perceiving that the finger of the colonel pointed to the list of "FASHIONABLE CHANGES."

"Worse a thousand times—of my daughter-in-law!"

And thus enlightened, the doctor had no difficulty in discovering an announcement among the "Departures" of "Mrs. Robert Hamilton from Coulson's Hotel, to the seat of Colonel Hamilton in Warwickshire."

"Vexatious indeed!" cried the vicar, "that you, who so seldom leave home, should have been absent on her arrival at the Manor!"

"She'll think, maybe, I did it o' purpose, poor soul! She'll fancy me wanting in respect. I wouldn't have it happen for the world! As if I hadn't enough to answer already towards her! Poor Ellen!"

"We may reach Burlington Manor by dinner time, if we start by the first train!" said the doctor, a little disappointed at this precipitate departure from London.

"Of course! The moment I read this cursed paragraph, I told Johnston to pack up. I ventured it without consulting you, my dear doctor, knowing how plaguy glad you'd be to get out of this smoky metropolis, and back to your flock."

"We shall be off in an hour or two. Still, 'tisn't like being on the spot with open arms to welcome the poor girl to her strange home. Ten to one, she wrote to announce her arrival to me, and the letter miscarried! One's never sure of foreign letters! Poor Ellen! 'tis rather hard upon her, though harder still upon me!"

And Dr. Markham readily discerned, by the flutter of the old gentleman's spirits, how greatly he was excited by the anticipation of this meeting with the widow of his last remaining son.

Throughout their journey down, which was chiefly performed on the railroad, instead of being cheerful and chatty as usual, he was almost silent. His thoughts were thoroughly preoccupied. He was back again at Ghazerpore, receiving his son's first letter announcing that disastrous attachment. He was listening to the mild remonstrances and intercessions of his wife. He was alone with Mary, and Mary with him. Dusky figures in Oriental garbs were loitering in the distance. Balmey smells of tropical plants were in the air. He was again an exile, again a husband, again a father; and a happy and contented exile, because a father and a husband. And, lo! as all these scenes and interests passed before his mind's eye, heavy sighs burst unconsciously from his bosom; so deeply was the old man moved by a thousand tender associations of affection and remorse connected with the name of Ellen Somerton.

"I'll make her happy yet! By George! she shall be happy yet!" was his concluding reflection. "So long as Mrs. Hamlyn and dear Lydia remain at Dean, she'll find no occasion for moping at the Manor; and a'ter'ard, we may still manage well enough. At all events, she'll have her own way; and, for nine women in ten, that's almost happiness enough. But though I'd give my little finger to know what brought about my intimacy with Harry Hamlyn, so as to correspond with him (as I saw at Cambridge by her own handwriting), I'll not force myself upon her confidence. I shall soon see whether she intends to be a heart in heart daughter and a dear Ellen to me, or whether there's a spice of rancour at the bottom of her heart that will still keep her Mrs. Robert Hamilton."

As usually the case with travellers in an inordinate hurry, delay occurred. In consequence of an accident to the preceding train, they were kept three hours at the Weedon station, when the impatience of the poor colonel was at its highest; and as, on arriving at Rugby, there were still twelve miles to be accomplished across the country, they did not reach the outskirts of Orvington till the village-clock was striking ten. All was still. A few straggling lights were alone perceptible in the cottages; and so tardy were the unprepared inmates of the vicarage in answering the gate-bell rousingly rung by the postboy, that, in pity to the impatience of his companion, Dr. Markham insisted on getting out to await the coming of his servant, while the colonel proceeded post-haste to the Manor.

After the usual delay at the park-lodge of an early to bed and early to rise gatekeeper, and the ordinary exclamations of wonder on the part of Goody Johnston, when at length the colonel obtained admittance into his own house, she hastened to acquaint her master that Mrs. Robert had arrived that morning, and already, worn

by the fatigues of her journey, had retired for the night.

"Plague take it! I'd have given anything for a sight of her afore I slept!" cried the old man. "But no matter! The poor soul's safe under my roof at last! Better late than never! I must wait till morning. I hope you made her feel herself completely at home?" cried he, suddenly addressing his housekeeper.

"I don't know why you should suppose me wanting in respect, colonel, to poor dear Master Robert's widow," replied Mrs. Johnston, with some indignation; and as she toddled out of the room to issue orders for tea and supper for the belated traveller, her master perceived that she had arrayed herself in her utmost pomp of silk and laces, to do honour to their guest. The old lady felt, perhaps, that, Master Robert's lamented mother being in her grave, it became her duty to exercise the motherly feelings of her late mistress in behalf of the stranger.

"Perhaps 'tis as well, poor thing, she should be abed and asleep!" mused Colonel Hamilton, as he sat down to tea, for, in spite of this self-consoling ejaculation, his disappointment had deprived him of all appetite for cold fowl and partridge-pie. And he patted Pincher anew upon his grizzly head, and master and dog were looking wistfully into the fire—as if both were thinking of Ghazerpore, and of how fondly poor Mary would have delighted in welcoming her poor daughter-in-law under her roof—when the drawing-room door was gently opened, and in glided a slender figure in a white dressing-gown, who advanced towards the colonel neither with the impetuosity of a heroine prepared to throw herself into his arms, nor with the hesitation of a person uncertain of her reception. She approached, however, with extended hands, as if conscious of her right to be there, and to welcome him, as the last comer, to their common home.

"I could not wait till to-morrow morning!" said she, after being folded to the old man's heart, with a degree of fervour that brought tears into her fine eyes—not, however, upon her cheeks, for Ellen was a person too accustomed to subdue her emotions, to indulge, as she felt inclined, in the luxury of a flood of tears; "I was so disappointed, sir, at not finding you this morning (having stupidly travelled by night for the purpose of surprising you), that I retired to bed earlier than usual to sleep off my ill-humour. I have only had time, as you perceive, to throw off my nightcap. I know you will forgive me for not having waited to dress!" said she, in broken sentences, which had all the grace of coming warm from the heart.

As soon as his own eyes were clear enough from tears, the old man drew back to contemplate the daughter-in-law whose fatal beauty had been the cause of so much family trouble; and instantly admitted to himself that in this utter dishabille, with her white gown folded loosely round her, and her black hair fastened in perfect simplicity round her head by a single comb, Ellen had the air of a duchess.

"Poor Bob was right," said he, in the aching depths of his heart. "By George! she's the most beautiful creatur' on the face o' the earth!"

These sentiments of genuine admiration did not diminish when, while drinking his tea, he sat watching the ever-varying expression of her fine countenance as, in answer to his hurried inquiries, she described her arrival in temp-

by an Antwerp steamer, escorted by her two servants, the day before, after pursuing her way from Switzerland by the Rhine.

"I am a perverse creature, or, rather, an obstinate one, as you will soon find, dear sir, to your cost," said she, already placed perfectly at her ease by the blunt cordiality of her father-in-law; "and having always made up my mind to return through Germany to England, I persevered in my intentions, though the Rhine presented nothing to my admiration but blocks of ice and leafless forests."

Such was her mode of evading the avowal that she had been unwilling to pursue, on her homeward course, the same route she had taken to Italy, three years before, in company with her unfortunate husband.

"And so, my dear Ellen, you and I, who have neither of us any more call to London than though we were foreigners, were actually in town at the same moment without a guess at it!" cried he, in his turn. And as he uttered the words, some peculiar turn of expression in the beautiful face on which his eyes were riveted suddenly recalled to mind a similar countenance on which they had lately rested; so lately, that he felt puzzled, as if by the realization of a recent dream.

At length, the truth darted into his mind. It certainly was his own Ellen he had seen in the carriage at the Horse Guards! The contrast between her white wrapper and the mourning weeds in which she was then attired had alone prevented the recognition from being immediate.

He was about to burst into an exclamation announcing their curious and unsuspected encounter, when, suddenly reverting to the letter he had discovered at Cambridge on the desk of Henry Hamlyn, and the presence of his young friend in the carriage he firmly believed to have contained his lovely guest, he conquered his natural impulse of frankness, and forbore.

"I won't force myself on their confidence," was his secret determination. "I won't force myself on their confidence. Neither of 'em know me yet enough to be aware whether I'm trustworthy. If, at the end of a week or so, she don't speak out, 'twill be time enough to inquire why she should make a mystery of her acquaintance with Harry Hamlyn."

It was a long time since the colonel had retired to his pillow so happy or so comforted with the sense of not being quite alone in the world, as he felt that night, under the certainty that his son's widow was enjoying a comfortable night's rest in the chints-room at the end of the corridor.

Next morning the good old gentleman's waking was a still happier sensation. To come down to breakfast with the expectation of having that pure, open forehead on which to imprint a parental kiss of benediction, was a comfort indeed to the kindly heart so long debarred the solace of female companionship; and as he contemplated her again from head to foot, he could not help admitting, with mingled pain and pleasure, how proud poor Mary would have been of such a daughter-in-law.

It was a happy morning for them both. The sun was civil enough to shine as brightly on their walk after breakfast as it had done on the Whitehall pageant; and the colonel felt that he had seldom had a companion more to his taste than when Ellen leaned upon his arm to visit the Thibet goats, and accompany him, escorted by Pincher and Carlo, to his usual haunts in the park and poultry-yard, where two or three fa-

vourite deer came ambling forward from the herd to be fed by his hand, while the peacocks, after creeping to his feet, set up their tails, in vainglorious rivalry, to attract his attention.

"I'm fond of dumb animals—fond of 'em as a child!" said the colonel, as he led her off towards the stables, to exhibit his stud, unaware how purely childlike were all his tastes and affections. "I mustn't plague you, though, with showing off my favourites. Fond of riding, eh? Ellen? Anything of a horsewoman? Then, by George! you shall have the most perfect lady's horse in the county. There's a half-bred Arabian I heard of at Leamington, out of the Ormeau stud, which I was inquiring about for my little Lydia's birthday. 'Twas too tall for her, but you shall have it afore we're a week older. I'm afraid you must put up with the old snobby's company by way of escort, my dear; for the only beau we've got hereabout, young Hamlyn, has just started for Melton Mowbray."

As this allusion had no ulterior motive (what allusion of the colonel's ever had?), he was startled by the sudden suffusion of Mrs. Hamilton's cheeks, as he just then confronted her for a moment in opening the door of his fine, airy, roomy, thirty-stall stable, one of the many surviving evidences of poor Sir Roger Burlington's extravagance. He had not conceived it possible that a woman naturally devoid of colour could blush so deep a scarlet.

From the stable they proceeded to the conservatories; and, had the pragmatical Anderson still presided over their arrangements, he would have been indignant at the recklessness with which Colonel Hamilton tore down the fairest blossoms, and stripped the air-plants of every semblance of bloom, the moment his daughter-in-law expressed a desire for a nearer view of their curious organization. All the devastations he had ever committed to please Miss Hamlyn were nothing compared with the result of the quarter of an hour spent by Ellen in the Burlington Conservatory.

"I wish to goodness Almighty you'd seen it in summer time, with the fountains playing and the birds singing!" said he. "But 'twas your own fault, Ellen. Why not come home at once, when you heard the old man had a roof over his head, and was all alone under it? We've lost a many pleasant months together, my dear girl; but we've a many, I trust, in store for us yet! I'm glad you're fond o' flowers, Ellen! 'Tis a nat'ral womanly liking; accustoms ladies to out o' door pleasures, and makes 'em healthy, and happy, and wise. Lydia and her mother are fond o' flowers; and if it hadn't been for *them*, last summer, my roses might as well have been blooming at Ghazerpore. You'll love Lydia and her mother, Ellen! Lydia must have been a mere child when you were at Dean afore? She's now a fine, promising young creature. You mustn't take a prejudice against Lydia 'cause she's my friend Hamlyn's daughter."

"Why should you suppose me likely to be unfavourably influenced against a daughter of Mr. Hamlyn?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, in a graver tone than she had yet assumed towards her father-in-law.

"'Cause you're a woman, my dear! a good one and a charming, I'm fain to believe; but still, a woman; and I never saw the petticoat yet, from a Begum down to a cobbler's wife, that didn't hide a heart having a little ugly corner for the resentment of injuries. There's no-

thing a woman understands so little, I take it, as how to forgive."

Spontaneously, poor Ellen pressed the arm on which she was leaning, in token that there were some offences she had fully forgiven.

"Nay, on the whole, my dear," resumed the colonel, "I'm not sure that I like you the less for the frown I saw contract your brows last night, when I accidentally stumbled on the name of Richard Hamlyn; 'cause so long as you vent any little anger you may still feel upon him, I've the better chance of being let off easy. The banker shall be my whipping-boy, if you please, and you may flay away to your heart's content. Only I claim exemption for the banker's wife."

"You cannot claim it more warmly than I am disposed to grant it," said Ellen, frankly. "For her, my short visit to Dean impressed me with sincere liking and respect."

"You'll walk over with me, then, to see her, after breakfast to-morrow? if, as I suppose, they arrive from Rotherwood Castle to-night."

Mrs. Hamilton made no reply; and the colonel, fancying his voice had been drowned just then by the click of the swing-gate of Ovington Vicarage, which they were entering, reiterated his question.

"It will be scarcely according to etiquette for me to call on Mrs. Hamlyn first," said she. "I had better wait, perhaps, for her visit."

"Well! I never should have fancied you the sort of a girl to stand on such idle ceremony!" cried he. "I thought you'd too much sense and too much feeling. You don't know how I loved you, my dear, for tumbling out o' bed in your dressing-gown and slippers last night, to make my acquaintance."

"Mrs. Hamlyn is not a connexion," replied Ellen, somewhat embarrassed. "Mrs. Hamlyn has not my poor Robert's blood in her veins."

"Oh! if it is *that*!" retorted the colonel, pressing her arm in his turn. "Only as you made no objection to accompany me here, to visit good Mrs. Markham, who's no more related to us than t'other—"

"The wife of the clergyman of the parish must always be the first personage in it," observed Ellen, calmly, "and as such, entitled to the utmost deference."

"And Mrs. Hamlyn—" the colonel was beginning. But at that moment they were received on the doorsteps by Dr. Markham, who cordially conducted the beautiful stranger to be introduced to his wife. A cheerful conversation ensued, which satisfied the Markhams of the important addition achieved by their little circle. Mrs. Hamilton was open, kind, intelligent; and when (according to Vicarage-custom whenever the colonel paid them a visit) the children made their appearance, and Ellen took the youngest into her arms and made much of it, so lovely did she look with the crimson cheek of little Kitty nestling against her own, that tears arose, for the tenth time that day, in the eyes of the poor colonel.

"Ah! if he'd only left a child!" murmured the old man to himself, as he turned towards the window to conceal the emotion—"if he'd only left a child! Poor Bob! 'twas all Hamlyn's doing. He meant no harm, I dare say, but 'twas all Hamlyn's doing! Well! God's will be done! 'Tis something to be able to press the hand of his widow."

CHAPTER XIV.

"Those cherish'd torments of our lives,
The best of daughters and of wives."—VANE.

INEXPRESSIBLE was the vexation of Richard Hamlyn at finding, on his arrival at home to a late dinner from the house, a couple of days after the meeting of Parliament, that his wife and daughter were waiting for him in the drawing-room. Like Lord Vernon, he felt indignant at being too punctually obeyed; for it was only because, on the colonel's sudden visit to town, he had written to desire they would not proceed from Rotherwood to Dean Park, but at once to Cavendish Square, that his family had accelerated their departure to London for the season. Mrs. Hamlyn's eager inquiry of, "Where is Colonel Hamilton, when is his daughter-in-law expected?" sufficiently proved that her husband's supplementary letters of instruction had crossed her on the road.

Now they *were* come, however, leaving the artful Mrs. Hamilton to establish herself fully and firmly in the good graces of her soft-hearted father-in-law, all that remained was to make the best of it. The London season had already begun, for that middle-class order of parliamentary men whose pleasures consist in their Wednesday and Saturday dinners, rather than in balls and parties. Ministerial cards were out—a levée and drawing-room announced—the Opera about to open. Mr. Hamlyn felt that he had no good reason to assign to his favourite "world" for prolonging the sojourn of his family at Dean Park.

A London banker, having a handsome establishment in town, is held bound to reassemble his domesticities about him as soon as may be after the meeting of Parliament. It would "look odd" were his usual dinner-parties suspended. It would "look odd" were his wife to be without an opera-box during the season of his daughter's *début*. It would "look odd" were his pew in Mary-le-bone Church to be empty, when the Christmas holly adorning that in Ovington Church was dried up and withered; and a banker is bound to eschew all and anything that "looks odd." Everything about him, both in public and private life, should be as even as the balance of his books.

On the morning following Mrs. Hamlyn's arrival in town, just as her husband was setting off to the city, she was startled beyond measure by his placing in her hand notes to the amount of four hundred pounds.

"I consider it necessary," said he, "that my daughter should make her first appearance in society with all the advantages becoming Miss Hamlyn of Dean Park. She must have everything that is handsome and suitable; and let half the money in your hand be appropriated in addition to your own usual allowance."

"I assure you we neither of us require anything of the kind," exclaimed Mrs. Hamlyn, endeavouring to replace the notes in his hand. "I am not likely to incur any additional expenses."

"It is my wish that you should do so. I desire that no expense be spared in—"

"Surely, surely," interrupted Mrs. Hamlyn, unable to repress her amazement, "you informed me the other day, at Dean (in reference to your disappointments with regard to Harry), that the house was in no condition to support any additional stress on its resources at the present moment!"

"Are you mad?" cried her husband, suddenly seizing her arm, and drawing her away from the study-door, near which they were standing, towards the distant window. "The men are in the dining-room removing the breakfast things. If Ramsay should hear you—"

"I fancied myself speaking low."

"You spoke like a fool, as all women do the moment they pretend to talk about business!" cried Hamlyn, in reckless irritation. "Once for all, take these notes and employ them according to my instructions. It is my wish that you make arrangements for presenting Lydia at the next drawing-room."

"Still, there will be no occasion for such an expenditure as this. The utmost she requires is twenty guineas for a court dress. She has the fine pearls presented to her by Colonel Hamilton; and I am sorry to say I have accidentally discovered that he is having a pair of splendid diamond ear-rings reset for her at Rundell's!"

"I shall not allow her to accept them!" observed Mr. Hamlyn, sternly. "Such a display on the person of a girl would be considered an act of profligate extravagance on the part of a banker's family; and to explain them everywhere as the gift of Colonel Hamilton would be like announcing intentions towards her, on his part, which I neither expect nor wish to see realized to the injury of my son. Any one who wants to marry Lydia must be satisfied with her five thousand pounds."

"With such prospects it is surely unnecessary to indulge in a foolish outlay for her introduction to society," observed the banker's wife.

"No outlay is foolish that serves to advance my ulterior projects," replied the banker, with a sneer. "Do you suppose I sacrifice these four hundred pounds for the maintenance of Lydia's vanity, or of my own credit in the world?"

"In that case I am less disposed than ever to create in my poor girl a taste for expense at variance with your intentions in her behalf, and, incompatible as you have given me to believe, with the state of your affairs," replied Mrs. Hamlyn—the wife having at length borrowed courage from the mother to assert principles of her own.

The banker stood gazing upon her in utter astonishment. It was the first resistance to his will she had hazarded in the course of five-and-twenty years of married life; and her resolution was now too calmly and mildly asserted to afford him any hope of putting down her opposition by violence.

"You will follow your own devices in this!" he resumed, in a voice as moderate as her own. "Perhaps it ought not to surprise me that, at a moment when my interests in life are sinking, and all the world seems in league to press upon and overwhelm a falling man, my own family should be the first to rush in and give the signal for the insults of the rest."

By the involuntary start of the distressed Sophia, Hamlyn perceived that this stroke had told—that the feelings of the wife of his youth were touched to the quick.

"You shall be obeyed!" said she, extending her hand, with a desponding air, to receive the notes he was still holding. "All I have to entreat is, that when the tree of evil shall bring forth its bitter fruits, you will not accuse me of having fostered its growth."

"I thank you—you shall be accused of nothing!" replied Hamlyn coldly, yet apparently

surmounting conflicting emotions. "We must stand or fall together. At our time of life, the standing or falling are of less consequence. The better half of our days is over; and, as far as I am concerned, the best they have afforded inspires me with little interest in the remainder. But the children demand our utmost exertions. The children have a long career before them. The fair prospects of Walter—the—the—"

He could not proceed. In naming his son, he was on the point of giving way to a weakness very unusual on the part of Hamlyn the banker. The heart of his wife thrilled within her as she contemplated what seemed to afford hope that the barren rock might still be touched, to yield forth the waters of life.

"By those prospects, then," cried she, clasping her hands in earnest entreaty—"by the future prosperity and happiness of your son, I implore you involve yourself no farther in difficulties beyond all power of extrication! If the firm be embarrassed, as you owned to me at Dean, let us retrench: let us cut short all idle expenses. We might reduce to a fifth part our present outlay. Why not, for instance, instead of commencing a showy, extravagant season, let this house to some advantageous tenant, and retire to Dean Park? You have apartments at the banking-house which—"

"I thank you," replied Hamlyn, with a bitter smile. "If you desired to place the names of Richard and Bernard Hamlyn in the Gazette, you could scarcely suggest a surer course of policy. I thank you! When I desire to rouse the anxieties of my customers, and point myself out to the mistrust of the city, I will apply to you for the speediest method of assuring my ruin. Till then, I will not trouble you for farther interference in my affairs than I have been hitherto in the habit of asking. I endeavour to render your life as easy as prosperity can make it. I have never sought to burden you with participation in my cares."

"I know it," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, in deep emotion; "and it is that very knowledge which makes me accuse myself as in some measure the origin of the position in which you stand. But for your desire to place your family in an honourable position in society, you—"

"Compose yourself—you have no share in the responsibility," was the banker's bitter answer. "But since you have become thus reckless in allusions to what cannot be even whispered in safety in the stillest watches of the night, I am to conclude that you adduced as an excuse for my breaking my engagement with Lord and Lady Rotherwood, that I was forced to hurry to London to parry the consequences of the recent failure at Liverpool?"

"You will scarcely accuse me of having ever injured your interests by my indiscretion," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, with a sinking heart and voice. "For the last twenty years, I have been keeping watch, with painful caution, over my words and actions. I excused you to the Rotherwoods on the general grounds of unlooked-for city business. But the countless was too much occupied by her sister's illness to take much heed of the affairs of any other person."

"The Marchioness of Dartford, then, is dangerously ill? In that case, her son will scarcely be able to join Walter at Melton?"

"I should think not. I was sorry to find Walter had so hastily quitted Dean, and for a place so likely to increase his expenses!"

"My son acted with my perfect approval," said the banker, coldly.

"Lady Rotherwood spoke to me with great regret of the dissipated habits of life in which her nephew is beginning to indulge. It is the desire of his family, it appears, that the marquis should settle young. He is an only child."

"And you fancy, perhaps, that the aunt who grudges him a few weeks' hunting at Melton, would promote his alliance with a girl having a few thousand pounds for her fortune!"

"It is not the *cost* of Lord Dartford's pleasures that creates the uneasiness of his family. With respect to Lydia, Lady Rotherwood was generous enough to express to me, in plain terms, that it would give her pleasure should her nephew attach himself to so sensible and prudent a girl as my daughter. I tell you this since you have thought proper to allude to the subject. But, having no reason to suppose the marquis's intentions serious, I shall dismiss it from my thoughts. Those of Lydia, I am certain, it has never entered."

"So much the better!" was Mr. Hamlyn's surly reply, as he prepared to quit the room for the shabby cabriolet, which, for nearly the first time, had been kept waiting by the unusual communicativeness of poor Sophia.

"I do not wish to see her head turned by vagaries so preposterous. Even were the match so possible, which it is not, it would ill suit me; at such a moment as this, to produce the sum indispensable for the dowry of a Marchioness of Dartford!"

Prepared by this painful interview for the course of policy her husband persisted in pursuing, it did not surprise Mrs. Hamlyn to find that a handsome new carriage was building for her, to be launched at the drawing-room, an excellent opera-box engaged; and that arrangements were already made for dinners twice a week in Cavendish Square, for three weeks to come.

"You certainly *are* the happiest woman in the world, my dear! You decidedly have the greatest jewel of a husband," cried Lady Bondwell, the wife of a brother banker, who was usually neck-and-neck with the Hamlyns in their course of ostentation. "I was at Storr and Mortimer's yesterday, and must say that your new wine-cistern is the most perfect thing I ever beheld! I might torment Sir Benjamin from now till the day of judgment, before he would give me anything of the kind! But what is there you have not got? Whenever I want to know what is to be the fashion for the season, I hasten to Cavendish Square."

This was, to a certain degree, true; but the luxuriousness imposed upon her was a matter of pain and grief to Mrs. Hamlyn. Though she might not presume to recur to the subject of pecuniary difficulties adverted to in the first instance by her husband, under the influence of the excitement produced by Henry's unlooked-for opposition to his wishes, she had reason to infer from the additional expenditure daily incurred by Mr. Hamlyn, and the forced spirits he exhibited in society, that his anxieties were undiminished. But for this, she would have been almost inclined to hope that her husband's apprehensions were assumed for the purpose of inducing her to influence the resolution of his son.

Such, at least, was the result of his strange confidences. Though she had failed in procuring Colonel Hamilton's interference with Hen-

ry, her own letters had reached her son during his absence from Cambridge; her own letters—full of the persuasive eloquence of maternal love; imploring him (without any prohibited allusion to the difficulties of the firm) for *her* sake—for the sake of the brother who loved him so dearly, to abstain from opposition to his father's will.

"I have reason to know," she wrote, "that the welfare of the family, of your brother and sisters (for of your mother, dearest, I will not even plead the claims) depends upon the certainty of a successor in the business, interested to protect their property in the event of your father's demise: Your cousin Bernard is weak—weak, alike in health and intellect, and every way incompetent for such a responsibility. I entreat you, therefore, my Henry, sacrifice your disinclination, and do the part of a son and brother towards us all! Your generous disposition cannot be better exercised than in such a self-sacrifice; your noble mind cannot exhibit its strength more usefully than in surmounting the reluctance you have so eloquently expressed. My son! your mother asks it of you on her knees! Make the trial—make the attempt! Do not—do not wantonly oppose your unhappy father!"

To such an appeal the answer of Henry was, of course, a promise of implicit submission; and Mrs. Hamlyn had the satisfaction of being the first to convey to her husband intelligence of his son's acquiescence in his plans. But poor Henry, while despatching to the admonitress he so reverently loved his dutiful compliance, was only too painfully aware that, like Coriolanus of old, submission to his mother conveyed ruin to himself. Compelled to resign his shortlived hopes of an enfranchisement from the calling he detested, which was to secure him the hand of the woman he adored, he sank; his mind became comparatively disabled. Those who were watching with interest his course of study, now so nearly approaching its crisis, saw, with grief and wonderment, that, at the eleventh hour, the young man's courage was deserting him. His exertions were flagging. There seemed no longer an incentive for study; now that the utmost distinctions he could obtain would avail him nothing towards the redemption of his destinies!

"She will never be mine! She has told me she will never be mine if I involve myself in the hateful speculations which have so hardened the heart and dried up the very nature of my father," was his ever-recurring reflection. "To have marred my own prospects in life by compliance with her peculiar prejudices on this point, I should not, Heaven knows, have hesitated. But my mother—my poor, dear mother, appealing to me in behalf of her children, was not to be denied. Scarcely more painful to me to renounce all hope of Ellen's affections, than it would have been to refuse the request of my inestimable mother."

Still, the result of the conflict in his mind was not the less injurious. He could no longer command his attention to the abstruseness of science; no longer apply the sterling faculties of his mind to the conquest of difficulties which he held mere trifles so long as he presumed to hope that university distinctions were to pave the way to professional success; and professional success to entitle him to independence and the hand of the most beautiful and most beloved.

"Oh! that I had never attempted that mad expedition to Naples!" he would exclaim, sing-

ing down his books, and pacing with hurried steps the quiet room, so long and so successfully devoted to the abstraction of study. "But for my enthusiastic desire to look once more upon that lovely face, the object of my dreams from boyhood (from the moment when, as a happy bride, she spoke so soothingly to the young enthusiast who beset her at Dean with his flighty fancies!) I might now be happy—the same dull, contented bookworm as of old, the same prospective man of business. Till Ellen Hamilton placed the picture of a banker's calling fairly before me, with all that eloquence of look and speech with which no breathing woman was ever gifted like herself, I was contented with my prospects. But now—even if she would consent to share them (and I know that no earthly persuasion or representation would shake her resolution!)—even if she would consent to share a mode of existence she detests and despises, I feel that I could never be happy deriving my livelihood from perpetual risk of the property of others. Wretched man that I shall be, the moment I quit these quiet walls, to plunge into all the vulgar strife and chicanery with which henceforward I must live surrounded. Wretched, wretched man! Without leisure to open a book—without the power to forget or to renew those blessed hopes and impressions, which seem to have been vouchsafed me for a moment only to constitute the ruin and torment of my life!"

Instead of persevering in the course of study pointed out as indispensable to repair the omissions produced by his Italian tour, the dispirited Henry wasted his days and nights in perpetual recurrence to the past, in cultivating associations derived from the relics around him—the sketches—the engravings—and, above all, the luckless myrtle branch—the first pledge of an ill-fated attachment—which he had received from the hands of Ellen when visiting with Lady Burlington and herself the Grotto of the Sybil at Cumæ.

"What matters it now how I go through my examination!" cried he, shrugging his shoulders, on receiving a dispiriting announcement that others were getting the start of him in the race. "If I could carry off all the prizes in the university, of what avail? What signify college honours to Henry Hamlyn, the banker!"

In writing to announce to Mrs. Hamilton the retraction of his engagement with herself, and his compliance with the injunctions of his mother, Henry had not presumed to give vent to these embittered feelings.

"She used to call me boyish and inconsistent," was his cruel reflection. "How often did she remind me that she is nearly two years older than myself in age, and ten years older in character! When I pledged myself to comply to the letter with her exactions about the firm, she predicted all that has happened; she told me I should never have strength of purpose to carry through my opposition to a man so coldly arbitrary as my father. Again and again did she prognosticate all that has happened; while I, strong in the encouragement of her presence—in the happiness of being near her—of listening to that stirring voice—of gazing upon that heavenly face—felt certain of my own resolution, and pledged myself heart and soul to the stipulations under which she promised at some future time to become my own. Dear, precious Ellen! It is something that even for a moment she deigned to recognise the existence of such a

nothing as myself! But I will not attempt to move her compassion by the pitiful avowal of all I am suffering. If unable to redeem my word to her, if unable to act the part of an honourable man, I will not sneakily content myself with obtaining the abnegation of her principles and feelings. She was frank with me—she opened her inmost heart—she owned she could not be happy with me if the greater portion of my days were spent in my father's counting-house. It were despicable to attempt to overcome these scruples by the picture of my misery—my despair."

Cold, therefore, almost to formality, were the terms in which the high-minded young man announced a sacrifice, the mere anticipation of which was tearing his heart-strings asunder; and Ellen was fully justified in feeling, in the bitterness of her mortification, that already the spirit of his future vocation was upon him, and that he "wrote like a banker." Not a word of appeal to her affections; not a loophole left for her relenting. So firmly did he speak of himself, so coolly of his projects; that there was every reason to suppose he rejoiced in the difficulties she had thrown in the way of their attachment by imposing unaccomplishable conditions.

"If my poor, dear mother only surmised the extent of the sacrifice she was exacting from her son!" was Henry's ejaculation, after perusing for the twentieth time the measured, the almost haughty reply of Ellen Hamilton to the letter acknowledging his altered intentions, and renouncing their brief engagement. "If she only knew! But may she never know it! As it is, her life, I fear, is not a happy one. It would only be a thousand-fold more grievous for learning that she has broken my heart."

"I'm most afraid, my dear girl, that you calculated too far on your own patience!" observed the colonel, on the other hand, to his lovely daughter-in-law, when, at the end of a fortnight's sojourn at Burlington Manor, he perceived that her steps were growing less light-some in their walks, and her voice less joyous in their conversations, than on her first arrival. "You didn't reckon what 'would be to live cooped up, morning, noon, and night, with an old codger like myself!"

"I do not experience the slightest want of society," she replied, and with sincerity, to this apology.

"I can promise you, however, that when I pressed you so hard to come and stay at the Manor, I wouldn't have done so for worlds, hadn't I thought that Lydia and her good mother would be on the spot, to cheer you with their constant company, as they did me through the summer and autumn. Poor Madam Markham is always taken up (and the more's the credit to her) with her bantlings and her poor; and as to those great folks at the Hyde, I believe you might get as good companionship out of the alabaster effigies of their forefathers on the tombs in Braxham Church!"

"If all the rest of the family resemble Mr. Vernon," replied Ellen, "I cannot express much regret for the want of their acquaintance."

"They don't resemble him, my dear; they're ten times worse! Alberio's the best of the bunch. However, he gave me a welcome piece of news yesterday, when he stopped my phaeton, as I was driving through Ovington. Walter Hamlyn will be at Dean Park to-morrow; that is, young Vernon told me Lord Dartford was

coming; and I don't suppose the captain would leave him to be entertained by the servants. So now, my dear, you'll be able at last to extend your rides beyond the park-paling of Burlington Manor."

"I have not the least desire to play truant," she replied, with a melancholy smile, how different from those which brightened her fine features on her first arrival from Italy. "It is not the want of knight or esquire that keeps me faithful to the old avenue. I am quite satisfied with Carlo's protection, if I had it at heart to scour the country."

"Without scouring the country, you may extend your excursions to see something of the neighbourhood. However, you must look to your heart, Ellen, I can tell you, when this young soldier comes flourishing his mustaches by our fireside! Watty's the handsomest young fellow, perhaps, you ever set eyes on in your life."

"My weakness does not happen to be in favour of handsome young fellows," replied Mrs. Hamilton, trying to assume the cheerful tone she knew to be so acceptable to her father-in-law. "The beauty of the Neapolitan peasants is quite enough to put one out of conceit with handsome men for the remainder of one's days. Since I travelled in the Abruzzi, an involuntary association of ideas always depicts a handsome man to me as weak, superstitious, cowardly, dirty, and sensual."

"A true picture, I dare say, my dear, as regards the Italian brigand! But Watty wouldn't thank you, I take it, for applying the likeness to him. To own the truth, Ellen," continued the colonel, determined to approach nearer to the subject upon which he had consistently imposed silence on himself than he had yet ventured, "to own the truth, I've more than half a wish at the bottom of my heart, that if you *should* ever make up your mind to marry again—"

"I never *shall*!" interrupted Ellen, in a low but steady voice. "You may rely upon it that I never shall!"

"I am sorry to hear you say so. Sacred as is my son's memory in my eyes, I feel that you didn't live long enough with my poor Robert, and that you're yourself too young and handsome, much too young and handsome, to tie yourself down to widowhood for the remainder of your days. 'Tisn't nat'ral, my dear, and 'tisn't what anybody has a right to expect of you. So, as I was saying, if you ever *were* to take another husband, I can't but own that my friend Hamlyn's son would be more acceptable to me as a son-in-law than e'er another. For a son-in-law your husband would seem to me! Now that I've come to see, and know, and love you, Ellen! trust me, I feel as if you were a born daughter of my own."

As the colonel had confidently expected, the checks of his lovely companion were deeply crimsoned at his allusion to his "friend, Hamlyn's son." But he would have wanted courage to push an inquiry intruding on her confidence, even had not his own heart enlisted itself in what he was saying, before the conclusion of his sentence, to a degree that utterly precluded all artful examination of her symptoms of emotion.

"And so, my dear," he resumed, after a momentary pause that produced not a syllable of reply from his companion, "if this Household-brigade chap should happen to take your fancy, so much the better for all parties. Hamlyn would be proud, I'm sure, to ask for his own son

the hand he was so idly scrupulous about bestowing upon mine."

"I have no doubt he would, after hearing your paternal declarations in my favour," replied the young widow, with a swelling heart and bitter smile. "Your *actress*, my dear Colonel Hamilton, whether actress, seamstress, or any other disreputable thing, would be welcomed on his bended knees into the family of the banker."

"Come, come! don't be too hard upon my friend! Hamlyn's the most honourable fellow upon the face of the earth! I could tell you some of the finest traits of Hamlyn that do honour to the name of man! Surely, my dear Ellen, since you've been down in these parts, you must have seen and admitted the value of an active, benevolent, steady, thoughtful man of business, to all the varied interests of the neighbourhood under his protection?"

"I have no doubt Mr. Hamlyn is a man of considerable influence and importance. He contributes largely to the local charities. So does Mr. Gratwycke (the fourth part, I am told, of his very moderate income!), which does not prevent my thinking the old gentleman a far from satisfactory companion."

"Ay, ay! a man may pay a large subscription to the treasurer of an hospital, and be none the better Christian for that. Gratwycke, for instance, a case in point, is always boasting that, though his estate is reduced to half by the badness of the times and excellence of the poor laws, he contributes to a guinea what his father did afore him to the support of the county institutions, invariably adding, 'It shall never be said that the name of Gratwycke of Gratwycke forfeited its rank among the county families in my time!' I'm not such an old oaf, Ellen, my dear, as to mistake that sort o' thing for benevolence! But Hamlyn's another description of fellow. Hamlyn sets his wits to work as well as his purse, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures! Look at the number of useful measures he has brought into Parliament. See here!" continued the colonel, suddenly snatching forward the Times newspaper that lay upon the table, and commencing as fluently as the absence of his spectacles would permit, a recital of the proceedings of a grand "Meeting of the Merchants and Bankers of the City of London," held at the Mansion House the preceding day, "RICHARD HAMLYN, Esq., M.P., banker, in the chair, for the relief of the sufferers by a recent inundation at St. Petersburg," &c., &c., prefaced by an eloquent preamble, and followed by a pompous list of subscriptions, at the head of which stood the firm of HAMLYN and Co. for £105. "What d'ye say to *that*, eh, my dear Ellen?"

"I should say, were I not afraid you would call me prejudiced and illiberal, that Hamlyn and Co. are probably extensively connected with the Russia trade."

Colonel Hamilton, who knew this to be actually the case, could neither refrain from a laugh, nor from patting her approvingly on the back.

"You're a cunning little gipsy!" said he. "Let a woman alone for diving into motives."

"Let a woman alone for diving into motives who has been cast alone and unprotected on the evil-dealing of the world! Had I never been vilified and injured by Mr. Hamlyn, I had probably been content to take his virtues, as others do, on trust. As it is, our paths happily lie separate; nor should I have hazarded these remarks, sir, upon a man whom you regard, but

for your recommendation of Captain Hamlyn to my affection. Even here, even in this house, from which I consider my poor friend Lady Burlington to have been driven into exile by the cunning of her husband's executor, I have never before presumed to lift up my voice against him; and in order to secure perfect unanimity between us (for I would fain that, during my stay with you, not even a difference of opinion should manifest itself), I promise to avoid all farther mention of his name."

"A kind and a good resolution, my dear, and I thank you heartily," rejoined the colonel. "However, as this is the last time we're to have my poor friend on the spit, let's even give him another turn and roast him to rags! Tell me, Nelly, like an honest soul as you are, have you any quarrel against the banker beyond a woman's nat'ral unforgivingness, for his unhand-some usage of you more years ago than I care to remember?"

"No quarrel, sir. But I own myself guilty of strong prejudices against a man whose only thought and object in life is the lucre of gain."

"Then, my dear girl, you must dislike me! For you may rely upon't that, for more than forty years of my life, my sole object was to heap up lacs of rupees, obtain the best interest for 'em, and—"

"But for what purpose, my dear sir?" interrupted Ellen; "and to what end? What did you sacrifice towards the acquisition of wealth, beyond your own time, convenience, comfort, and abilities? or to what was the wealth, thus acquired, destined, but to secure the well-being of your family, the happiness of all around you? Whose property did you put in peril by your speculations? whose substance did you waste by your transactions? to whom did you lend money on unseasonable interest, facilitating the extravagance that wrought their undoing, till the place of their forefathers knew them no longer? and when were the riches thus vilely acquired applied to the scarcely less contemptible purpose of dazzling the eyes of society by false appearances, and figuring among the shifting throngs of London life? Show me the object of Mr. Hamlyn's domestic affections, show me the household happiness created by the hollow ostentations of his ill-earned wealth! A broken-spirited wife, a daughter who scarcely uplifts her eyes in his presence, and one, at least, among his sons thwarted in the dearest and brightest ambitions of his heart, in order to fulfil the narrow purposes of parental policy!"

"And how the plague do you know all this?" cried the colonel. "God knows such is not the picture I ever painted you of Dean Park!"

"You forget," replied his daughter-in-law, disapproving his expectations of having betrayed her into the avowal of her intimacy with Henry Hamlyn, "that I was a whole week the inmate of Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn, only three years ago."

"All I can say is, then, that you made the most of your time! However, as you mentioned before, Walter was away with his regiment when you were at Dean; and of his position as regards his father, you had no means of judging. Of Walter, believe me, Ellen, Hamlyn's as fond as ever I was of e'er a child of mine! To Walter he would make any sacrifice!"

Mrs. Hamilton shook her head with an incredulous smile.

"Well, well! Some day or other you'll be

forced to own there's nothing in nature Hamlyn knows how to refuse to his eldest son."

"Right, sir—to his eldest son! Those two words explain the whole secret of Walter Hamlyn's influence. I see by your face that already you accuse me of illiberality. But I declare to you I should as soon expect to pluck a living, fragrant flower from under the scorching lava effused by a volcano, as detect a tender, human feeling in the heart systematically devoted to money-getting by the slave-trade, or by speculation with the means of others!"

"Nay, but surely!"

"No, no, no! I will not hear a single extenuating word!" cried Mrs. Hamilton. "I loathe the hard, unsympathizing nature created by perpetually deafening the ears to the cries of our fellow-creatures, or by incessant contact with money—money—money! In my view, Mr. Hamlyn is less than a man—a mummy created by the Gannalizing process of injecting his very arteries with metallic fluid. I could no more experience sympathy with such an individual than with—"

"The Marquis of Dartford and Captain Hamlyn!" announced Johnston, throwing open the drawing-room door.

And it was with her fine face glowing under the influence of her recent denunciations that Ellen had to do the honours of Burlington Manor to the two handsome young strangers now hastily presented to her by her father-in-law.

CHAPTER XV.

"The portion of the world which I at present have taken up to fill the following sermon, is one of which there's no description recent; The reason why is easy to determine, Although it seems both prominent and pleasant, There is a sameness in its genus and ermine."

BYRON.

"By heavens! my dear Hamlyn, I am beginning to twig what Vernon was after, this morning, when we found him lounging along the Ovington Road, in spite of an east wind that might have cut the county jail asunder, and craning over the park-palings of Burlington Manor!" said the marquis to his friend, as they rode back together to Dean Park. "What a beautiful woman!"

"I told you you would lose your heart!" replied Walter, with a forced smile.

"But I have not lost my heart! The widow is a splendid creature, but I should as soon think of falling in love with Homer's ox-eyed Juno! I hate your Grecian, Medea-like beauties, who look like the tragic muse walking in silk attire; and who ought to carry a dagger and bowl, instead of a caudle-cup and bodkin. I should always expect to find this beautiful Ellen of yours wandering about Dartford Hall in her sleep, like Lady Macbeth! My blood curdles at the thought! No, no! not the least fear of my trying to cut you out with the rich widow."

"Nor of my resenting it, if you did!" replied Walter. "I have no pretensions in that quarter."

"Why, I heard the old gentleman hinting to my Aunt Rotherwood, when I was last at Dean, that nothing would suit him better than to have you for a son-in-law!"

"One don't marry a woman for the sake of pleasing her father-in-law."

"Why, one does, sometimes, when the father-in-law happens to have four hundred thousand

pounds to make ducks and drakes of; besides being so capital a fellow as old Hamilton. Why, you might buy out the Burlingtons (their property's famously embarrassed, I'm told), and throw the manor into a ring-fence with Dean Park."

"As another ring-fence must be accomplished at the same time," said Walter, laughing, "the prospect does not charm me. I should never feel at my ease with such a wife as Mrs. Hamilton. She would reduce one to too complete a pigmy."

"Ay, ay! I see we agree about her in the main. To paraphrase the old fellow they misquoted, the other night, so outrageously in the house, she—

is too bright and good
For human nature's daily food.

To my taste a woman cannot be too commonplace. The commonplace of a genuine woman—that is, a feminine, gentle, lovely, lovely edition of man—is perfection. I like it as I like the commonplace of an oak-tree, or of a rose-tree in full bearing. 'Tis a thing that can't be improved upon. The case of woman ought not to be declinable—there is nothing better than good. *Best* is a pleonasm, a work of supererogation. Good ought to suffice for man; that is, every man ought to fancy his own 'good' the best."

"You are splitting your straws somewhat fine this morning, my dear Dar!" cried Walter. "Is it to revenge yourself that 'tis *des non* with the hounds with such weather for a run?"

"Why, you see I've been shut up at Dartford Hall for the last fortnight, with only my poor mother and her chaplain, my old tutor; with whom I was forced to chop logic, to prevent myself from chopping off his head—and so much for Buckingham. But seriously, my dear fellow (if one ever *can* talk seriously where petticoats are concerned); don't you think that in every-day life Mrs. Hamilton would be apt to pile up the agony too high? There are three leading points to consider in a woman—heart, soul, body (that's my interpretation of the allegory of the three graces). Not a woman in a million unites perfection in the three. Two, therefore, are as much as a moderate man ought to pretend to, and *one* might, on a pinch, suffice. A pretty woman with a good heart, therefore, constitutes my irresistible. As an enemy to monopoly in all shapes, I dispense with the soul; so, while I content myself with a warm-hearted, pretty little wife, you shall have the handsome widow, with her great soul, all to your own share."

"How easy it is to perceive, in your estimate of women and wives, the notions of a man to whom birth and fortune offer no temptations!" said Walter, almost with a sigh. "Very few are able to abstract themselves from such considerations. Very few of us can afford to choose a woman for herself. Half our regiment (pray admit) would rate the three graces of a wife as 'beauty, rank, fortune.'"

"Tis clear, however, my dear Hamlyn, that you do not subscribe to the doctrine, since you will have nothing to say to a beautiful creature with twelve or fifteen thousand a year."

"I require something a little more refined than Bob Hamilton's widow," replied Walter, impatiently. "I should be very fastidious, I fear, about the dress and manners of my wife."

"Pho, pho! the dress and manners of a woman may be fashioned into what you please."

"Not where there is a deficiency of natural

taste. For instance, you would never teach the beautiful Ellen to come into a room with the instinctive elegance of Miss Vernon."

"Instinctive fiddlestick! Miss Vernon is made up of what you call elegance—a mere empty egg-shell! She has not even the womanly dignity of Mrs. Hamilton; far less the natural feeling and untaught grace of your sister Lydia. By-the-way, Hamlyn, I bet you a pound we receive an invitation to the Hyde before this time to-morrow."

"I'll double the stake if you promise to accept it when it arrives," said Walter.

"What! after engaging ourselves to the old colonel; and when I've set my heart on getting that Lion Hunt out of him again? I tried to give it to old Parson Buckingham at Dartford Hall. But I suppose I failed, for I couldn't get his wig to stand on end, as poor dear Lord and Lady Rotherwood's did, while they were listening to Colonel Hamilton."

"Didn't I tell you so?" cried the marquise, when, that very evening, cards of invitation to the two young men arrived from the Vernons. "I wish Alberic had staked his chin on the park-palings of Burlington Manor this morning, before he carried back news of our arrival to the Hyde! Blessed, however, be the said manor among the nations! for it affords us an undeniable excuse to these officious people."

And with the utmost glee Lord Dartford proceeded to plead a previous engagement in his answer to the Vernons, while Walter could scarcely repress a sigh at having to confess a similar disqualification. It was almost too mortifying to have to renounce a visit to the Hyde, in company with the Marquis of Dartford, when qualified by his recent visit to Melton to charm the ears of Lucinda by a thousand inedited anecdotes of fashionable gossip, for the mere purpose of joining a humdrum family dinner-party at Burlington Manor.

On the other hand, the excuse of the young men was received with as ill a grace as Walter's was despatched.

"Was ever anything so provoking!" cried Lady Vernon, tossing Lord Dartford's formal note into her daughter's workbasket. "Engaged, they write word, to those people at Burlington! And after all the difficulty, I had to obtain your father's sanction to my inviting young Hamlyn here again!"

"We must take Lord Dartford as we can get him," replied Lucinda, coolly. "Love me, my banker, or, rather, my banker's son!"

"But you see we do not get him the more for tolerating his banker's son! It appears likely we shall have to love his Colonel Hamilton into the bargain."

"Impossible, now the Middleburys are gone! One could bear the old savage diluted with Middleburys. Out of the question to have him here now. Papa would be obliged to have recourse to his colchicum, as he does against a flying-gout! Heigho!"

"Barlow of Alderham was telling me the other day that this daughter-in-law, who is staying with Colonel Hamilton, is one of the most beautiful women in England," observed Lady Vernon.

"Daughter-in-law? I thought he had no children, and that the horrid Hamlyns were to inherit his fortune?"

"This is his son's widow, whom they want to marry to the banker's son."

"And a very suitable match," replied Lucinda. "But very suitable matches seldom take place. And supposing, as the Dean Park girl is out of the way, that Dartford himself should become attracted by this new beauty?"

"Mother! you should really make the sacrifice of calling at Burlington!" cried Lucinda, after a long pause for reflection. "It is essential we should see what this Mrs. Hamilton is like, and ascertain what she is about. You will scarcely believe that Mr. Barlow had the coolness to hint to me she would be a capital match for Alberic, who appeared immensely smitten on seeing her the other day at the meeting of the bounds at Braxham Heath."

"Mr. Barlow had better be more cautious in his observations," said Lady Vernon, rising stern, tall, and square, from her cabriolet *fauteuil*. "Lord Vernon's son ally himself with the daughter of the person who proposed that poor Clansawney should be hanged? A nondescript Mrs. Robert Hamilton become Viscountess Braxham? for, between ourselves, my dear Inda, there is every chance of a change of ministry, and then, you know, your father's earldom is safe!"

"So much the better, mamma. It is almost too hard to be called Miss Vernon, like a Miss Hamlyn, or a Miss Barlow! But about this visit to Burlington Manor?"

"You know I can refuse you nothing. If your father will consent, we can drive there to-morrow. To say the truth, Alberic has been already at me on the subject. Alberic has only paired off till the hunting is over, and wants, I suspect, to see something of this Oriental beauty before he goes to town. As to *marrying* her! Of course he means nothing but a flirtation."

To Lady Vernon's surprise, she obtained from her lord not only permission to proceed to Burlington Manor, but, having proceeded thither without finding the beauty at home, to invite her and Colonel Hamilton to dinner, as a pretext for a new invitation to the young fox-hunters at Dean Park.

"This really exceeds belief!" was her ladyship's exclamation on receiving an answer from Mrs. Hamilton, which, while opening, she had not an instant doubted must be one of acceptance. "These people are engaged, Lucinda, actually engaged; and I will give you a month to guess to whom!"

"To the Barlows, or Gratwyckes, of course. There is no one else at present in the neighbourhood; for the Hursts, I conclude, do not invite people to assist them and their hungry locusts of children, with their boiled mutton and turnips? Papa ordered a neck of venison, yesterday, to Alderham, as we were riding home by the keeper's lodge."

"Country gentlemen do not give dinners on the strength of a neck of doe-venison!" said Lady Vernon, with a smile of contempt. "Guess again!"

"Such people are scarcely worth the trouble. They cannot come, and there is an end of the matter."

"By no means the end of it! They will be able to boast to the Elvasons, on arriving at Ormeau, of having refused in *their* favour an invitation to the Hyde. Just conceive what a triumph for that impertinent Lady Cossington, who, I have reason to know, fancies she cut you out with the marquis!"

"But what in the world can take these people to Ormeau?"

"I cannot guess. Alberic told me he noticed an intimacy, at covert, between the duke and that dreadful old colonel. I must repeat that I think it rather hard of Lord Vernon to have placed impediments in the way of our intimacy with the only family fit to associate with in this part of the county. Judge, by their taking up these strange people, how glad the Elvasons and Cossingtons would have been, had your father seemed disposed to be sociable! You see they have never invited Alberic."

"They could scarcely ask *him* without us."

"Unless I am much mistaken, they will invite Captain Hamlyn, with Lord Dartford; yet the Dean Park people, I know, are on the most distant terms at Ormeau."

"What a charming party they will have!" mused Lucinda Vernon, deeply mortified; "and what a winter have we brought upon ourselves by coming hither! Thank goodness, next week will put an end to it; and if I am not rewarded for my patience by a month at Brighton, I will appeal to Sir Henry, next year, and get myself *seriously* ordered to Naples. After all, dear mamma, don't you think we might have managed to make the six weeks seem a little less like twelve, if we had been on pleasanter terms with our neighbours? Had we been friendly with the Hamlyns, we should have met Lord Dartford at their house; had we been friendly with the Elvasons, at theirs; had we been friendly with Colonel Hamilton, even at Burlington Manor! And since we thought Lord Dartford's company worth a journey to Naples to secure, surely the lesser sacrifice of a few boring country visits was no consideration! My father dislikes the Duke of Elvaston as a greater man than himself, and despises the other two, as infinitely below him. Where are we to find the level which is to enable us to enjoy society? As the German emperor observed, when requested by his nobles to exclude all but the higher classes from the Augarten at Vienna, 'You insist, then, upon meeting none but your equals? Were I to attend to this rule, I must shut myself up in the family vault of my ancestors in the Augustine Church!' Next winter, accordingly, if papa persists in his unsociality, Alberic and I will be driven for society to the old gentlemen and ladies in armour and farthingales on the monuments in Braxham Church!"

The invitation which proved thus aggravating to the ire of Lucinda Vernon had produced, meanwhile, little emotion at Burlington, unless as affording a satisfactory excuse for evading a visit to the Hyde. Colonel Hamilton was averse, as he had stated in apology to the Roth-erwoods, to all large parties of strangers, and the same plea would probably have been again brought forward but for his desire that his charming Ellen should enjoy something more suitable to her age than the seclusion of his dull fireside.

As regarded her natural inclinations, on the other hand, Mrs. Hamilton found more attraction in the cheerful domesticity of the manor than in all the excitements of fashionable life. But she was *not* now in a natural state of mind. She was mortified, restless, resentful. Her heart was weary with incessant reflections. She began to believe that some peculiar destiny attached the Hamlyns to her path, to injure her and molest. From *them* came all the bitterness of her life; from them her sole humiliations. Richard Hamlyn had been the means of injuring her fair fame; of bringing down the gray

tears of her mother with sorrow to the grave; of developing in the slight frame of her husband the germe of mortal infirmity. Scarcely had she raised her head from the deep despair produced by this series of calamities; scarcely had she begun to find anew in life those gleams of domestic happiness rarely extinguishable in the prime of youth and beauty, when a being had thrown himself in her way, endowed to excess with the qualities most likely to captivate her imagination and attach her heart: for the young widow had already become painfully conscious of the loneliness of her social position. The passionate affection of which she had been for years the object served only to render her more sensible of her present isolation; and when the young enthusiast, with whom she was unexpectedly brought into contact in the domestic circle of Lady Burlington, surrendered himself as devoted a slave to her beauty as in better days that gentle reserved sufferer whom she had seen sink into the grave, the only drawback to the hopes of renewed happiness was, that the man so passion-struck, and so qualified by the highest endowments of nature to render his preference a blessing, was the son of her enemy, the future successor of Hamlyn, the banker!

And now, all that in the first moment she had dreaded, was fatally come to pass. She had predicted Henry's strengthlessness against the iron will of such a father. She had announced to him that, on his return to England, he would be compelled to adhere to a calling and career which she was firmly resolved should never obtain an influence over her wedded life. And thus compelled to abjure her hopes of happiness, she was alone again—more alone, more isolated than ever—because aroused by the recent manifestations of Henry Hamlyn's respectful but passionate attachment to a sense of the unequalled happiness of confiding, mutual love.

Against his father, as the origin of Henry's change of feeling and the sudden relinquishment of his generous intentions, all her resentment was directed; but she was not the less wretched, the less deeply humiliated, that she was able to attribute this new blighting of her destinies to the malignant influence of her former enemy.

Thus disappointed in the hopes which had accelerated her return to England, thus imbuttered in her feelings against Dean Park, even the sincere affection she was beginning to entertain for her kind father-in-law did not reconcile her to herself or to her mortifications. She felt conscious of having too easily bestowed her heart; she accused herself of faithlessness to the memory of the dead. Rebuked by the supposed fickleness of Harry, she fancied that she was only justly punished for having, after all her earlier vows of perpetual widowhood, again inclined her ear to the blandishments of worldly affection.

Amid these morbid recriminations of self-reproach, the quiet seclusion of Burlington ceased to charm. She hated to find herself exposed, in all the familiarity of its tranquil fireside, to the curious examination of Walter. Suffering and dispirited, she dreaded the idea that he would describe, in his letters to his brother, her swollen eyelids and tear-stained cheeks; and it was, consequently, a relief to be invited from home while Captain Hamlyn was the inmate of Dean Park.

For Lady Vernon was premature in her sup-

position that Walter and his friend would be asked to meet the Hamiltons at Ormeau. No such project had been a moment entertained. The Elvastons were plaindealing and somewhat oldfashioned people, who, never having been on terms of intimacy with either Richard Hamlyn or his father, would have conceived it impossible suddenly to establish a familiarity with Walter, merely because he happened to have their young friend, Lord Dartford, as his guest.

That the old gentleman for whom his grace's friend, Mr. Gratwycke of Gratwycke, had inspired him with such sincere respect, should produce such additional recommendations as a country neighbour as having for his inmate the beautiful Mrs. Hamilton, warmly commended to the Marchioness of Cossington by her sister, Lady Devereux, the wife of the English minister at Florence, was an unexpected delight to all parties; and in welcoming Ellen to Ormeau, the ladies of the family soon made her aware of their opinion that all they had previously heard in her favour fell far short of the impressions created by herself.

In the large and multifarious party assembled at the Duke of Elvaston's, Colonel Hamilton, meanwhile, found himself far more in his place than in the ultra-fashionable circle of the Hyde. Lord Cossington, the heir-apparent of the family, was little more than a good-humoured country gentleman, who devoted half the year to his duties as a member of Parliament, and the other half to his pleasures as a sportsman; while the Duke of Elvaston himself was but the best of family-men, lord-lieutenants, and masters of fox-hounds. Moreover, the father of Lady Cossington, Sir Robert Maitland, who was fortunately staying in the house, was not only an old general of brigade, but had commanded in India, in a country, and among troops, familiarly known to Colonel Hamilton. With such companions, he was instantly at his ease, without being too much at his ease. No boys like Dartford to tempt him into buffoonery; no solemn prigs like Lord Vernon to taunt him into petulant reproof!

There was something in the solid but noble simplicity of the house, that enchanted him. Ormeau exhibited neither the imposing historical dignity of the Hyde, nor the modern elegance of Dean Park and the manor. It was a vast commodious mansion, built by Inigo Jones, and furnished half a century ago with a degree of taste and richness precluding all interference with its arrangements; till, at the close of another half century or so, and another growth and fall of timber, sentenced to be furnished again. There were no nicknacks, no modern prettinesses, no fashionable *sautouils* at Ormeau. The huge Nankin vases on the pier-tables had probably been bought in Queen Anne's time at the New Exchange or India House; the rich Japan screens, at the toy-shop of Mrs. Chenevix. The last portrait of the family collection was the present duke, when a boy, by Hoppner. Not so much as one of the graceful and emasculate pictures of Lawrence to connect the square, roomy simplicity of Ormeau with the flimsy elegances of the day! The duchess deposited her crochet-work, every night, in the huge, oldfashioned Tonbridge-ware workbox presented to her by the duke, on the birth of one of her children twenty years before; and, by way of writing-desk, a little inlaid ebony letter-case, which she

had used as a bride, still served her correspondence with her grandchildren.

The same stand-still order of things pervaded all the habits and connexions of the house. The Duke and Duchess of Elvaston stood too substantially in the world to veer about with every wind of doctrine. The people with whom they had associated in their youth were their associates in their age. They used the same tradespeople, and entertained the same friends. No running after new systems or patent inventions. Happy, respectable, dignified, they desired no changes save such as were forced upon them by the progressive spirit of the times.

A totally different view of the business of life held good among these people, and among the Vernons. The Elvastons conceived themselves to live at Ormeau, and looked upon London as a place of pastime; whereas the family at the Hyde regarded the country as a place reluctantly endured, during the intervals of glorious London. Much of this arose from the circumstance that the Elvastons were not court-haunters; that they had no rank to intrigue for—no daughter to marry. Their chief pleasure in life consisted in that princely hospitality which affects no display, but knows no intermission. Ormeau was literally what is called an "open house." For months, nay, years together, the family never sat down to dinner alone. As to the hounds, in which the duke was supposed to take such intense delight, and which had obtained an almost proverbial name in England, they were, in fact, merely an item in the amusements he felt bound to provide for his friends and neighbours. Impossible for a man to have a more kindly or sociable idea of the duties connected with the rank and fortune assigned him by inheritance.

Nevertheless, the service of plate on his grace's table was what Lord Vernon would have considered old-fashioned and mean. There was no splendour *dessus de table*, as at the Hyde; no effigies of ancestors on war-horses in gold or gilt plate; nor any of the little table fopperies dear to the systematic dinner-givers of the day. The sideboard of the very Hamlyns was more showy; for the phrase "living in good style" would have passed for a sad vulgarism at Ormeau.

The colonel was as much delighted as amused to perceive in what a different light men and things were considered by his new friends and by the flashy Vernons. At Ormeau, the lights and shadows of life were broader, and motives as clearly laid open as actions. All was fair and aboveboard. No subterraneous story to the edifice—no masked attic! The sun shone searchingly into the whole structure.

Among other peculiarities, he found that Hamlyn never was depreciatingly alluded to, as by the Vernons, as a mere man of business—a city banker. In the eyes of the Duke of Elvaston and his son, he was simply a political influence—the Tory member for Barsthorpe—one of the ayes or noes of their party. Even the Vernons, great as they were in their own conceit and that of the sexton of Braxham Church, represented at Ormeau only the Whig member for an adjoining county, and the defeated Whig interest for Barsthorpe.

The colonel had not been many minutes in the house, before he found himself engaged in earnest conversation with Lord Cossington and his father-in-law, concerning the very questions on which he had been able to afford information to Lord Crawley. Aware that the question of

the Indian war was about to be brought before Parliament, the two painstaking Tory members were eager to make themselves masters of the subject from the fountain head; little suspecting that the Home Secretary himself had drained it dry, and that any intelligence they might extort from Colonel Hamilton was only robbing their poor friend, Crawley, of his parliamentary "thunder."

A little later, and Colonel Hamilton was startled by an inquiry from the duke himself, of whether he intended to get into Parliament. In that house, it was held that a man of fortune had no civil existence, unless he was in the house. The Ormeau interest carried with it six votes. The Ormeau interest constituted a little party; and it seemed impossible to the marquiss and his father that any man could feel engaged in the active business of life, unless connected therewith by that wisp of straw called parliamentary influence. Nevertheless, the duke's simple question of "Have you no thoughts, my dear sir, of getting into the house?" sounded in the old gentleman's ears much as if his grace had said, "When are you likely to be consecrated Archbishop of York?" He excused himself, therefore, with a laugh, wondering how the Duke of Elvaston could possibly have formed so exaggerated a notion of his consequence.

"I tried to persuade our friend Mr. Gratwycke to meet you here to-day," said the duke, glancing round a dinner-table of thirty people, and half afraid that the party might contain too many fox-hunters to be altogether agreeable to the Indian veteran. "But I fancy he has entirely given up dining out. At least, he would not hear of honouring us at Ormeau."

The colonel replied by a few words in confirmation of the supposition that old Gratwycke had ceased to dine out of his own house; but, while puzzling himself to recollect whether it were gout or chronic rheumatism, or simply that worst of distempers old age, by which poor Grat. had been disabled, his attention was arrested by a question addressed by the Marchioness of Cossington, beside whom he was seated, to his daughter-in-law, who sat nearly opposite.

"My sister Devereux wrote me word, last spring," said she, "that all Rome was running to Gibson's *atelier*, to see a magnificent bust, for which you had sat to him in the character of Diana, the most beautiful of his works! May I inquire whether you have brought over a cast of it? My father is one of Gibson's earliest patrons!"

"Lady Devereux was in some degree mistaken," replied Mrs. Hamilton, greatly embarrassed; but whether at having to give such an explanation before a large party of strangers, or because conscious of guilt in the Henry Hamlyn chapter, the colonel could not determine. "Gibson had an order for a group of Diana and Calisto, from Prince Wirzakin, a Russian noble, who is doing wonders in Italy as a patron of the arts. It occurred to him that my head might serve as a model for his principal figure; and having been a frequent visitor to his *atelier* with Lady Burlington, I was happy to oblige him. Such was the origin of the work. I should scarcely, otherwise, have had the presumption to sit for my bust, in the character of a classical divinity!" added Mrs. Hamilton, with a smile.

"You have told us the origin of the work," replied Lady Cossington. "But you must leave it for me to add that this beautiful head, when

finished, extorted raptures among the Italians, and that an enormous price was offered for a copy of the bust by the King of Bavaria for the Glyptotheca."

"All this is fine news to me, my dear!" cried the colonel, addressing, in his turn, his daughter-in-law. "Why the plague didn't you bring me home a copy of this famous bust? I'm no great judge of the arts; but I'm a warm admirer of the beauties of nature; even where my whole heart is not enlisted in the object, as in the present instance."

"I knew you possessed a miniature of me, sir, and thought it might appear presumption to return to England laden with such a very cumbersome trophy!" replied Ellen. And she forthwith entered into conversation with her neighbour Lord Edward Sutton, a younger son of the duke, and travelled man, touching the state of sculpture in Europe, and the high rank maintained by English artists among their Continental brethren. When next the colonel was able to catch a few words of their conversation, she was describing, in language that did justice to the subject, the exquisite statue just completed by Gessu, for the tomb of Malibran at Lacken, which she had visited in her recent transit through Brussels. The unequalled beauty of the spirit of Harmony ascending to its native skies, adorned with all the ethereal grace of that triumphant *chef-d'œuvre*, was aptly described. "I had not before conceived it possible," said Mrs. Hamilton, "to impart to such a substance as marble the action of *soaring*. One knows not which most to admire in this beautiful work, the ecstatic and rapturous expression of the countenance, or the buoyancy of the attitude."

The colonel was disappointed. There was no bringing her back from this to a graduate of Cambridge, or a set of rooms in Trin. Coll.!

In the evening, there was music; music which, to the Italianized ears of Mrs. Hamilton, sounded strangely enough. The Duke of Elvaston and his son were directors of the Ancient Concert and patrons of the Catch Club; and Handel, Purcell, Locke, Scarlatti, Bach, still found favour in their ears. The most modern music tolerated at Ormeau was the graceful shallowness of Mozart, the quips and quirks of Arne, or the tender monotony of Cimarosa.

With Lady Cossington's admirable performance of one or two of Handel's songs Ellen was unfeignedly delighted; but when the worthy duke, his sons, and two or three habitual stagers at Ormeau, betook themselves to violins and violoncellos, and murdered a very learned symphony of Salomon's, she resorted to her Neapolitan evenings of Donizetti, Bellini, and Mercadante with a sigh that borrowed, perhaps, some sadness from the personal reminiscences with which it was connected.

Still, the evening was a very pleasant one. There was a whist-table in an adjoining drawing-room, so as to form no obstacle to the noise of the amateurs, or the conversation of the anti-melodists; among whom was the good colonel, who had actually beguiled Sir Robert Maitland from his favourite Purcell, to talk over Cabool and Dost Mohammed. The two veterans had established themselves in two old-fashioned chairs (which had probably been privy to arguments touching the War of the Succession, and the manoeuvres of Dettingen), to fight over the recent Indian campaign; and having this time found a friend to sympathize in his indignation

against the policy of the Earl of Clonsawney, the colonel could do no less than reward his new ally by bestowing the most patient attention on an account now given by Sir Robert of a system he was pursuing to reclaim a vast tract of land on his estates in the Hebrides, chiefly with a view of bestowing employment upon and preventing the emigration of his Highland tenants.

"I flatter myself we have done wonders!" said the old soldier; "and for these two winters past, I have had the comfort of knowing that sixty or eighty families had warm beds to lie on, and plenty of good food in their stomachs, who, before, had barely rags to cover them or victuals to eat! One sleeps the sounder, my dear Colonel Hamilton, for such a consciousness. However, my agent warns me that I must not go farther than I can feel my way back again. I have had four girls to portion off; and my younger sons have a right to all my hoardings. I am forced, therefore, to crawl, when I would much rather walk. However, I have just received the welcome news of some Bhurtpore prize-money, to be paid off; so there will be joy in Glen Coll, and among the poor fellows at Usk. My daughter Cossington is very angry with me because I talk of going up to town to-morrow to look after it. But as I don't visit London above once in five years, I have no banker there, and only my Edinburgh factors to manage my business for me, who scarcely understand that sort of thing. We are told that the way to have our boots shine is to be our own shoeblocks; so I must even vex poor Flora, and rail it to town."

"I wish to Heaven I'd known it t'other day, when I was in London!" cried the colonel. "I would have been a pleasure for me to look in at the Lady House, or War Office, or wherever you've been referred to. 'Tis a thousand pities to leave this pleasant house and party to do what any honest man might do for you!"

"Why, I should not be sorry to spare myself the journey," replied the veteran. "I have an old wound that is too apt to trouble me if I bestir myself too much in cold weather, which is the reason I'm so seldom able to come southward, and visit the girls. However, business must be done."

"By George! I think I could manage it for ye!" cried the colonel, elated by the idea. "I've a right-hand man o' my own, not to say a bosom friend as well as one of the warmest men in the city, who has managed such matters for me half a hundred times before."

"Indeed?" cried Sir Robert Maitland, already expanding into the kindest congeniality with his gray-headed brother soldier.

"'Tis one o' the partners in Hamlyn's house; a fellow with a head long enough for a chancellor of the exchequer. At least I ought to say as much to a man who secures me five and a half per cent. for my money in times like these."

"Faith! this is indeed a man worth inquiring after," cried Sir Robert. "I have long been in want of some practical man, in London, who could give me a notion, at a pinch, of the state of the money-market. I'm guardian to two dear girls, the orphans of an old Highland neighbour of mine, whose small portions are none the worse for having abided in my hands. But, as they are advancing into womanhood, I sometimes reproach myself for not having done better for them; and by a little management, and a friend at court, I have no doubt I might still make their little sum rounder, before they are marriageable."

This would be a great satisfaction. Suppose, colonel, you give me a line to your wonder-working banker."

"I'll do better than that, if you'll allow me," said Colonel Hamilton. "If you will make my excuses acceptable to the duke, I'll run up to town with you to-morrow (I've taken up the trick o' gadding lately, I think); and we'll go and say our say to Hamlyn, dine at the United Service, look in, if you like, at the pantomime, and be back again to dinner here the following day."

"You take away my breath, my dear sir!" replied Sir Robert, not a little amused at his impetuosity. "Though some years your junior, I'm not quite up to such electric movements! However, throw me in another four-and-twenty hours into the errand, and I'm your man, and most gratefully. You are here, I know, till Monday. Leave your charming daughter-in-law, without fear or anxiety, to the care of Flora. I will go and talk it over with Lady Cossington and the duchess."

Colonel Hamilton was, in fact, far from regretting an excuse for a second journey to town, without having to leave Ellen alone at the Manor. Highly as he prized her society, it did not altogether console him for the loss of Mrs. Hamlyn's severe and subdued companionship. The loftiness of character revealed in the thoughtful brow of his daughter-in-law often repressed upon his lips those familiar pleasantries which were sure to find an echo in Lydia's girlish laugh, or meet with smiling indulgence from her mother. He wanted to see them both again. He wanted to congratulate Mrs. Hamlyn on the submission of her son Henry, and ascertain whether the young Cantab had been more frank with her in his avowal of acquaintance with Ellen than Ellen to himself of her intimacy with him.

Between a friendly visit to Cavendish Square, and a business visit to Lombard-street, his little excursion to the metropolis was likely to be exclusively devoted to the Hamlyns.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Such men are dangerous."

SHAKESPEARE.

RICHARD HAMLYN was, as it has been already asserted, as absolute in his firm as Richard Cœur de Lion at the head of his army. His nominal partner had not crossed the threshold of the counting-house for years; and over his subordinates, the active partner exercised all the influence arising from a character of the highest integrity, and eminent ability as a man of business. For the probity of the counter is distinguishing as the honour of knightly spurs; and the pen of Hamlyn the banker was glorious as the lance of Bayard.

Whenever a hitch occurred in the progress of business, the clerk in perplexity had only to ask five minutes' conversation with the head of the house, and all was unravelled, the funds in demand were forthcoming, and the question in suspense decided.

Few bankers' clerks have leisure to inquire more curiously into the private affairs of their principals than regards the due payment of their salaries and the replenishment of the till. All that the establishment in Lombard-street knew or cared to know about those of the Hamlyns, was, that they were very opulent people, whose

wealth, aided by the strong and speculative mind of Richard, was always on the increase; and the quill-drivers were accordingly happy, overbearing, and self-sufficient, as it becomes the clerk-hood of a thriving house to be.

Still, there was one among them, Spilsby (the baldheaded clerk, to whom the "widdier o' John Darley, o' Lemon-Tree Yard," had been turned over by his master), who had a somewhat shrewder eye and more calculating mind than the rest. To him there were peculiarities in Mr. Hamlyn's mode of keeping the accounts. There were evidences of mistrust in his mode of receiving the dividends and disposing of the securities of the house, unsatisfactory to one who conceived that nearly twenty years of diligent service ought to have placed him nearer on a level with the head or heart of his employer.

His suspicions on these points once awakened, he had no hesitation in profiting by the facilities afforded by his situation to pursue a variety of trifling investigations to which he had never hitherto given a moment's attention; or, rather, to which, had he been on more confidential terms with his master, he would not have permitted himself to direct his notice more than comported with his duty to the firm. But, on the very first occasion of his placing his finger on one of the suspected spots, Mr. Hamlyn had taken him up so haughtily, and imposed upon him so vexatious and difficult an account to wind up, in order to direct his attention elsewhere, that Spilsby, instead of being grieved that the firm should have occasion to condescend to artifices, and zealous to assist their temporizing, was resolved to wait with patience, but pursue with perseverance, the substantiation of his suspicions.

But the mistrust of Richard Hamlyn was now also awakened. He had not the slightest doubt the head-clerk was more than half aware that all was not well with the concern; and his agony of anxiety to discover to what extent Spilsby was enlightened, was torture indeed! Every day, as he passed through the banking-house, his first glance was directed towards the bald-headed clerk. Every evening, when they left off business, his first care, when the keys were delivered to him, was to examine the eyes of Spilsby, to discover whether anything had transpired—whether a triumphant expression gleamed under his overhanging brows—or whether despondency depressed the corners of his mouth. A domestic traitor, such as this, was a million of times more to be dreaded than the Italian gossipings of Ellen Hamilton and Sir Roger Burlington's widow.

As is usual in such cases, the object of apprehension soon became aware of his power. Though unable to penetrate to the root of the matter, or surmise the exact source of the irregularities which placed his employer in fear of investigation, Spilsby saw that he had, at any moment, the means of discomposing the self-possession of Mr. Hamlyn, by a certain dry sneer, accompanying his manifesto of the prosperous state of their assets. He had only to fix his eye searchingly and insolently on his master, when announcing a large deposit, to render Richard Hamlyn's countenance infirm, and his answers incoherent.

All this was anguish to the banker. His pride in Lombard-street autocracy was altogether destroyed. He could not stir, speak, write, move, but he fancied himself under the surveillance of

Spilsby. During the private conversations held in his back-room, he always pictured to himself the ear of the baldheaded clerk affixed to the keyhole; and when alone with him, sometimes felt inspired with a gladiator-like desire to spring upon him and crush out of the offender's breast the extent of his knowledge and detections. He lost his cool shrewdness and common powers of calculation whenever Spilsby was present. With the eye of the baldheaded clerk fixed upon him, Hamlyn was no longer able to combine the mysteries of Austrian Scrip and London Omnium. Othello's occupation was gone!

Meanwhile, every step of self-possession ceded by the banker was a step of advance to Spilsby. The life of the clerk became one of prying and groping, surmise and scrutiny. At one moment he fancied he had discovered an immense deficiency in the Exchequer securities of the firm. But the trap had been laid for him by Hamlyn, in order to determine whether he were or were not engaged in investigating the private affairs of his employers; and no sooner had he hinted, with due deprecation, his fears that Mr. Hamlyn had been made the victim of some knavery, than the banker quietly produced the missing securities, and knew as well how to interpret the crest-fallen surprise of Spilsby as he had before interpreted his ill-disguised and contemptuous exultation.

From that moment the baldheaded clerk became stern in his purpose of detection. He saw that his suspicions had been understood and frustrated by the superior cunning of his employer; and from his knowledge of the determined character of Hamlyn, was satisfied that he would spare no pains to destroy the man who had dared uplift the veil concealing his gangrened member. It had, in short, become a strife for life or death of character between the two. Though retaining towards each other the external courtesies becoming their mutual position, the looks of each spoke daggers. They often conversed together smilingly of the weather, when each was thoroughly aware that the other would willingly denounce him to the world—the law—the jail—the hangman!

Such was the intimate position of the man who was entertaining ambassadors and home secretaries at his table, and commanding the cheers of the House of Commons!

It was after enduring, as he would have borne the fangs of a rattlesnake, the furtive glances of Spilsby, while passing through the counting-house to his private room, at his usual early hour, one fine morning in February, that Richard Hamlyn, on seating himself before his desk to examine a file of letters marked private, and a series of slips sent in for inspection for the cashier, sank back in his chair, incapable of giving his attention to the smallest of these documents; so deeply was he moved by the poisonous smile which had traversed the face of Spilsby, on perceiving his entrance. Like Haman, he would willingly have issued orders at that moment for the construction of a gibbet fifty cubits high, to exterminate the Mordecai of his abhorrence.

At that moment a card was sent in to him requiring attention. Miss Cresswell, for the last ten years the governess of his daughters, and for the last six months absent, on leave, with her family in Ireland (at the express entreaty of Colonel Hamilton), having just arrived in town by the mail, had thought proper to wait upon

her patron in the city, believing the family to be still at Dean Park, for instructions and greeting on her road; that is, for rudiments of instruction in the financial line, in return for all the geography and use of the globes she had lavished on Lydia and Harriet. To accord the interview requested, was no gratuitous sacrifice on the part of the banker; for poor Miss Cresswell had been one of the most passive instruments in his hands, regarding him, in the awestruck veneration of her heart, as a politician little inferior to Metternich, and a financier superior to all the Rothschilds of all the capitals in Europe. By long experience, therefore, Mr. Hamlyn was aware that he could silence her by a word, and dismiss her by a nod.

But he was not prepared for the changes effected in an Irish nature by a renewal of the cordialities of an Irish home! The poor little dependant, so long refrigerated by the proprieties of Cavendish Square, was now thawed into a human being. For six whole months the humble governess had been thinking and feeling for herself, till, at the last, "she spoke with her tongue." Hamlyn would very much rather she would have held it; for he was ill prepared, just then, to bear with idle talking. He was in no humour for her rhapsodies, scarcely even in a humour for her gratitude. The arrival, at that moment, of the fussy little woman, excited by the prospect of rejoining her beloved pupils, was like the importunate buzzing of a gnat round the head of a traveller who is lying on his guard in ambush against the attack of a lion.

"The kindness you have always shown me, sir," said she, after a long preamble about hoping to have merited his esteem and good opinion by her conscientious devotion to the care of the minds, morals, manners (geography and the use of the globes included), of his daughters, "imboldens me to intrude upon your valuable time, with a few questions relating to interests exclusively my own. Mr. Joseph Cresswell, my uncle, sir (I fancy I have before apprized you that I have an uncle an eminent legal practitioner, that is, a thriving attorney in Limerick), has always been in the habit of receiving and investing the amount of my stipend, transmitted through your hands, sir, to his credit in Latouche's bank. These little savings, sir, thanks to your generosity and the indulgence with which Mrs. Hamlyn favours my prudent parsimony by her disregard to—"

Hamlyn groaned in spirit at the prolixity of the professional phrase-maker.

"In short, sir," resumed Miss Cresswell, perceiving his impatience, "I am now mistress of a sum little short of one thousand pounds—a considerable one, indeed, when it is considered that I came into your house a penniless young woman, with nothing to depend upon but my own industry and abilities for my future support in life. I ask your pardon for detaining you, sir, but I am coming to the point. My uncle is advancing in years, and being about to dispose of his business, has suggested it to me that (the various members of my family being far better off than myself) I should sink the little capital in question in a life annuity."

"A very prudent suggestion!" observed the banker, still seeing before him, interposed between his eyes and the little prim, skinny face of Miss Cresswell, the significant smile and penetrating eyes of the clerk, so that the phantom almost deprived him of his reasoning powers.

"My uncle Joseph assures me, sir, that this sort of business is more practicable, that is, more *secretly* practicable in London; that a word from you to your man of business would procure me some favourable occasion for a safe investment; and, as a preparatory step to the proposition, he is desirous of remitting to you, for my benefit, the whole amount of the small sum in question. If, therefore, I am not taking too great a liberty—"

"My dear madam, there is no service in my power to render you which you have not the fullest right to claim at my hands," said Hamlyn, much relieved, and in his blandest accents. "Your inestimable services to my daughters, your judicious watchfulness over their education, entitles you to my utmost gratitude and respect." Then, as if satisfied that he had repaid her, sentence for sentence, fudge by fudge, he drew forth from the blotting-book a quire of official-looking note-paper, and indited to his solicitor, Mr. Crossman, of the firm of Crossman and Slack, of New Norfolk-street, a recommendation of the bearer to his utmost consideration, and begging that the professional services rendered her might be placed to his own account.

This act of munificence, if probably intended as a *bouquet d'adieu* to curtail the somewhat lengthy negotiations of the prolix wholesale dealer in Lindley Murray's Entire, failed of effect. Under the influence of relief from the oppression of six-and-eightpences to an amount untold, poor Miss Cresswell burst forth into benedictions and rejoicings still more diffuse.

"This generosity is no more than I might have expected, sir," said she, "from your father's son. My uncle Joseph was saying to me the other day (when congratulating me on my good fortune in maintaining for so many years my place in your establishment and good opinion), that, when he had occasion to visit the English metropolis, on business, thirty years ago, the name of Walter Hamlyn was a by-word for all that was distinguished in worth, probity, and intelligence. My poor uncle, sir, had once a money transaction with the late Mr. Hamlyn, which left an ineffaceable impression on his mind. Nearly about the same time he had an audience of the late Mr. Pitt, and declares that, of the two, Mr. Hamlyn, of Lombard-street, struck him as by far the most competent man of the two."

Longer the governess would have spoken, and far longer would Hamlyn have listened; for praise bestowed upon the name and memory of his father was, in his ears, as the charming of the charmer. Filial reverence constituted the sole redeeming virtue of his life; and no sooner did Miss Cresswell treat of the late banker as superior to Mr. Pitt, than he began to regard her as superior to Miss Edgeworth. But at that moment, the face of Spilsby, the real, substantial Spilsby, peered into the room, requesting to speak with Mr. Hamlyn.

There was nothing unusual in his voice or aspect; yet such was the nervous trepidation of Hamlyn under existing influences, that he seemed to hear in those simple words a mysterious denunciation.

"Mrs. Hamlyn is expecting you every moment in Cavendish Square, where I shall have the pleasure of seeing you this evening," said he, by way of dismissal to the governess, who instantly gathered up her gloves, velvet bag, and

umbrella, for a hasty exit; on which Spilsby no longer hesitated to acquaint the agitated banker that "Colonel Hamilton and a gentleman were waiting for him without."

Inexpressibly relieved, Hamlyn desired they might be instantly shown in; then, ere there was time for the execution of his order, hurried into the counting-house, with outspread hands, to welcome the most highly valued of his friends, and receive an introduction to Sir Robert Maitland. Another moment and all three were seated in the banker's room; where Colonel Hamilton, with his usual aptitude for rushing in *medias res*, was already in the midst of his Ormeau chapter of politics and finance.

"If you've heard lately from Watty, you didn't expect to see me here to-day, I calculate, my dear Hamlyn?" cried he. "You scarcely fancied me likely to leave my quarters in a land overflowing with milk and honey, to run up care-crazing to Lon'on, to break my head against your strong boxes! But I've brought you a friend, that is, a good customer, which is the best kind o' friend—who wants you to put him in the way you put all the rest of us, of finding five-and-twenty shillings in a guinea."

Richard Hamlyn, at present ignorant with whom he had to deal in the stranger, and scarcely hoping that Providence would supply him with a second open-handed old soldier knowing no more of business than a cartouch-box, felt rather nervous at the effect these preposterous announcements might have on his new client; and, accordingly, began inquiring after the health of Mrs. Robert Hamilton, with a view of eliciting general particulars respecting his visiter.

The attempt prospered. While the stranger assisted Colonel Hamilton in replying to the banker, by allusions to the care of his daughter, Lady Cossington, under which Mrs. Hamilton was residing at Ormeau Castle, Hamlyn was enchanted to find that he had to deal with Sir Robert Maitland.

Few things would have gratified him more than the notice of the Duke and Duchess of Elvaston, as a set-off to the insolence of the Hyde. Under the fosterage of Ormeau, he might still look down upon Barlow of Aldersham, defy Gratwycke of Gratwycke, and stand his ground against the united squirearchy of the county. Nothing, in short, more desirable to him than the acquaintance of the stranger, by obliging whom it was possible to secure the gratitude of Lady Cossington, and the future favour of the Elvastons.

By the time Sir Robert had half explained his views, Hamlyn was taking down notes of his Bhurtpoor claims, suggesting a certificate, by affidavit, of his life, a power of attorney entitling Hamlyn and Co. to receive, and undertaking to manage the whole business for him at the several periods at which the prize-money was to be made payable to the claimants.

The money-interests of Sir Robert's wards were considered with equal alacrity; the question of the reclaimed lands with deferential interest.

"I perfectly remember the bill for the enclosures of Glen Coil being brought before the House," said Mr. Hamlyn. "I was even on the Committee for the Improvement and Benefit of the Western Islands, in which the amelioration of the Maitland estates was brought under the notice of Parliament. Your factor, a Mr. M'Causey, a very superior man, was examin-

ed; and infinite credit did he do both to himself and his employer."

"God bless my soul! to think of your having been present at poor M'Causley's examination, of which I have since heard no end!" exclaimed Sir Robert. "A most curious coincidence, my dear Colonel Hamilton! How little I imagined that your friend, Mr. Hamlyn, had ever heard mention of my poor fellows at Glen Coil! Well, to be sure, the ramifications of business, in this commercial country, are a most astounding thing!"

"I remember deeply regretting at the time, my dear sir," resumed the banker, with increased and increasing suavity, "that I had not the honour of your acquaintance, or that of some member of your family, in order to suggest to you the feasibility and great advantage to all parties of establishing at Usk a company not only for the burning of kelp, but for the manufacture of iodine, on the Königsburg system—a mineral the value and importance of which is becoming daily more appreciated in Great Britain and the British colonies."

The two old soldiers were becoming every moment more impressed by the legislative perspicacity of the banker; who now proceeded to examine and cross-examine Sir Robert Maitland touching the nature and capabilities of his Highland property; till the veteran began almost to fancy that the nest-egg he had been keeping so snug for the benefit of the more impoverished portion of his clan, was a golden egg at the least; and that he should be a goose unless he brooded it with the steadiest incubation.

Suddenly interrupting himself, as if recalling to mind, on mention of Bhurtpoor, the interest experienced by the two soldiers in the affairs of India, he asked leave to examine one of the letters marked private and confidential, which was lying on his table when he arrived; the handwriting of which apprized him that it proceeded from an individual occupying a place of trust in the India House, to whom he paid large *douceurs* for priority of information on the arrival of the mails; and, lo! as he had ardently hoped might prove the case, the letter in his hand announced most important intelligence, only to be made public in the evening papers. Both Colonel Hamilton and Sir Robert were enraptured. They were of an age when public news acquires threefold importance. Old men, in proportion as their participation in wordly pleasures slackens, seem to take double delight in tidings of sieges, insurrections, earthquakes, treaties, or declarations of war, as if conscious that the night is approaching when no man shall work; that a time is at hand when even the "Times" newspaper shall manœuvre its columns for them in vain.

Ere their glee had abated at hearing of a petty victory on the borders of Tataria, important only as likely to raise the price of consols from 74½ to 74, Hamlyn expressed his earnest desire that, instead of returning into the country by the four o'clock train as they threatened, now that their business was accomplished, they would do him the honour of dining with him in Cavendish Square. He expected a few friends, he said—one or two remarkably pleasant men. It would afford him sincere pleasure to enable these gentlemen to make an acquaintance so interesting to all the friends of humanity, as that of Sir Robert Maitland, of Glen Coil.

The old general was almost bewitched by

such flattering unctuous of adulation; and the colonel desired no better. For they had arrived late the preceding evening, and as yet accomplished none of their projects in London, except dining at the club, and looking in at the pantomime; and Colonel Hamilton was really anxious for a little private conversation with his friend, the banker's wife, ere he returned to the country.

The consent of both, therefore, was readily obtained.

"Upon my life, I never met with a pleasanter or more sensible man!" exclaimed Sir Robert, as they drove back to the West End.

"A very remarkable man, sir—a man of such general information! A son in the Blues, I think you say? Glad to hear it! One of the finest regiments in the service! I like to see a man who has been grinding down his own life and spirits at the desk, have the pluck to put his boy into a crack regiment, to wear triumphantly in the world the trophies of his father's humbler labours. I'm pleased at the thoughts of our dinner, my dear colonel. It has not often fallen in my way to be behind the scenes of Mr. Hamlyn's order of society. I shall be really glad to witness the domestic life of so important a body as the mercantile aristocracy of this commercial metropolis."

Had Lord Dartford been present, he would certainly have rewarded with a "hear, hear, hear!" the pompous manifesto of the worthy old general, who had scarcely an idea beyond the horizon of the Highlands. But even the marquis would have admitted it to be singular enough, that at half-past seven that day, Lieutenant-general Sir Robert Maitland, K.C.B., should be accompanying to dinner to a house he had never entered before, a friend of whose existence he had been ignorant three days preceding. Such, however, was the familiarizing charm attached to the *bonhomie* of Colonel Hamilton, that nothing seemed strange in the arrangements to any of the parties concerned.

They were the first to arrive, for the colonel was eager to shake hands with Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughter; and while he entered eagerly into conversation in a low voice with the former, touching the news she was receiving from Cambridge, Sir Robert good-naturedly replied to Lydia's inquiries concerning the recent news of the Ormeau hounds, and the sport enjoyed by her brother. She said nothing, of course, of that enjoyed by the Marquis of Dartford; but as the two young men were now seldom a hundred yards asunder, it was probable that all that was good for Peter, in her solitudes, was also good for Paul.

The banker, unprepared for the premature visit of his new acquaintance, and having arrived late from the House of Commons, to which he had made a hurried visit in the interim, appeared in the drawing-room just as the carriage of the succeeding comer drove up to the door; and Sir Robert, while shaking hands with his agreeable host, now transformed from the seedy city drudge into the well-dressed, smiling, assiduous man of the world, fully anticipated from the bustle the announcement of some brother-merchant—some Baring, Roberts, Smith, Drummond, or Hoare. But, to his great surprise, the guest announced was one of the leading members of the Tory cabinet! Lord Crawley shortly followed. Then came Flimflam, the reviewer, by way of sipplet to the ragout; then,

the Earl of Harringford, a nobleman who might have worn a professor's gown had he not been born to a peer's robes; then, the Earl and Countess of Rotherwood; and, lastly, two men rarely seen out of the House of Commons—one of them a learned lawyer, whom Flimflam accused of living within the rules of the Temple, and only being suffered to go out by a day-leave.

The K.C.B. was a little surprised. He could almost have fancied himself in the lordly circle of Ormeau, except that he soon heard the arts and sciences, and politics, which, though neither an art nor science, possess the power of crushing and extinguishing them all, discussed under the banker's roof with fifty times the *connaissance de cause* that ever enlightened such arguments at the table of his grace the father-in-law of his daughter. Sir Robert Maitland began to discover that bankers of London were a race as distinct from the bankers of the "gude town" as Highlanders from Lowlanders; or that they had altered strangely during his absence from England, fighting her battles in the peninsulas of India and Spain.

Still less could he have imagined himself at the table of the Duke of Elvaston, when they arrived in the dining-room. Hamlyn, like all who have their way to make in society, was a professed dinner-giver, and studied the vocation as a science.

On his refined board, the lordly sirloin, so dear to the Duke of Elvaston and Sir Roger de Coverley, would have been out of place. But his fish course had been pronounced by the greatest epicure extant to be the most perfect in London; and the finest of the many fine gentlemen who honoured Walter Hamlyn with their company had been heard to say, that, though there might be finer plate and a vaster *locale* at D— House, S— House, or B— House, nothing could exceed the elegant *savoir vivre* of Cavendish Square. It was the very boudoir of the temple of gastronomy.

Sir Robert, as became his age and calling, was fond of a good glass of wine, and fancied that the cellars at Ormeau afforded him glorious occasion for the indulgence of such a taste. But he now found himself nonplussed. Claret was no longer Claret, nor Burgundy Burgundy; so various was the nomenclature, and so numerous the flavours under which each of his favourite wines pretended to recommend itself to his notice! He found that even Moselle was a house divided against itself; and that Champagne, like man, in its time played many parts—

Wearing strange shapes, and bearing many names.

But the old man was not partial to innovations; and the iced pineapple water, handed round between the courses, was, in his opinion, a wretched substitute for the lime-punch of his own Glasgow; and when the dessert came on table, the difficulty of deciding between the reality of the iced-cream fruits lying cold and deceptive on their napkins, and the splendid prize-fruit, fresh from the forcing houses of Dean Park, put him out of conceit even with the gigantic strawberries and cherries before him.

Meanwhile, pleasant greetings had taken place between Lord Crawley and the old worthy of Burlington Manor, who was not slow to claim the congratulations of the Home Secretary on the early verification of his predictions respecting the Indian war.

"I own I agreed with you in believing that

the thing was nearly over," replied his lordship, gayly, "seeing that the newspaper-press had taken to designating it as 'interminable.' Ever while you live, mistrust the cut-and-dry phrases of leading articles, which are mere tubs for the whale. The 'designs of Russia,' for instance! For the last thirty years have these phrase-mERCHANTS been accusing Russia of 'designs!' Russia, whose policy is the coarsest, most peremptory, and most insolently straightforward in the world! As if, were Russia cunning enough to have designs, she would not be shrewd enough to prevent their becoming the fable of Europe!"

"Perhaps," interposed Flimflam, "she may be aware of the advantages of a bad reputation, and assume the part of a plotter in order to disconcert the machinations of other cabinets; just as people circulate reports at Christmas of having the typhus fever or smallpox in their country neighbourhood, to discourage the intended visits of their friends."

Sir Robert gazed with amazement on the little man, whom he alone of all the party did not know to be a professional diner-out, engaged, like the pyrotechnist of a public fête, for the discharge of squibs and crackers; and, taking Flimflam's assertion to the letter, expressed a doubt that might have become the lips of my uncle Toby, whether there existed a true-born Englishman capable of inhospitality so flagrant. This was glorious to the wit, who thereby earned an anecdote of provincial simplicity to be retailed at his next dinner-party; embellishing, of course, the simple assertion of the general with a broad Scotch accent, that would have made the fortune of a low comedian at the Surrey theatre.

Perceiving by this *sortie*, and the spirit with which it was backed by Colonel Hamilton, that there were country gentlemen at table, Flimflam now put forth the strength which often failed him in company with men of Lord Crawley's shrewdness and knowledge of the world, of the technical memory of the clever Templar, who was apt to place people somewhat unceremoniously in the witness-box, and the grave ratiocinaciousness of the Earl of Harringford, who reduced all things, from a new mineral to a new pun, to analysis and demonstration. Assuming, from that moment, his *real* part in the play, which was that of an indifferent mezzotint copy of the great Sidney Smith, satisfied to retail in society not frequented by the clerical wit the pungencies which told all the better for the *aplomb* with which they were rehearsed by the stepfather of the joke.

"I suppose you heard what Sidney Smith said the other night?" was, however, as fair-dealing an indication of the source of his *bon-mots*, as the name of Cousins or Doo inscribed on the corner of one of Lawrence's or Wilkie's pictures, as circulated print-wise through millions of hands, by comparison with the treasured original; and people like the Rotherwoods were as thankful to the dapper little gentleman who procured them an opportunity of hearing what "Mr. Smith had said so amusingly about the island of Hong Kong," as to the martyr who sleeps in a leathern suit at the tops of trees in Mexico to preserve himself from beasts and reptiles of prey, in order to provide orchideous plants for the conservatories of lords and ladies.

All this time, while the two old soldiers sat listening open-mouthed to the echoed facetiæ of what they conceived to be a revived edition of

Mr. Joseph Miller, Hamlyn was noting, unnoticed, the countenance of Lord Crawley, from whom, for the first time in the course of their political acquaintance, he had written the preceding day to ask a favour. From his long experience in deciphering the hieroglyphics of the human countenance, the banker fancied he should be able to foresee as readily as the teller of a division the "ay" or "no" of the official, in the courtly smile assumed to cover a negative, or the forced unconcern purporting to neutralize the dignity of conferring a favour. Between the Plombières and its accompanying glass of Malmsey, Richard Hamlyn flattered himself that the intentions of the Home Secretary would betray themselves.

Nevertheless, the practised Crawley ate, drank, and digested, with a face as inexpressive as a whitened wall; and Lord Harringford might as well have attempted to work a problem upon the constellated dried cherries on the surface of the Nesselrode pudding before him, as the anxious solicitor to infer anything concerning the success of his suit from the blank countenance of the great man.

Nor were matters more lucent when the ladies and servants disappeared. The circle narrowed, and the jokes grew broader. The two officials whispered together, the templar grew strong and pungent as a summer radish, the Earl of Harringford snored, and Colonel Hamilton and Sir Robert Maitland mentally whispered their regrets that the real Simon Pure, the *editio princeps* of Sidney Smith, had not been laid before them that day, instead of the flimsy fellow who represented him much as the fiddle and harp mangle one of Rossini's overtures for the distraction of the passengers in a Ramsgate steamer represent the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre. Yet still Hamlyn made no advance in his discoveries; and, with his usual tact, exerted himself to prose plausibly on, through a long series of social truisms and political surfaceisms, as a man is privileged to do at the head of his own table, in order to disguise his watchfulness; trusting that, while assisting the digestion of the Earl of Rotherwood by the emission of a dulcet morality such as daily forwarded his lordship's evening nap at Rotherwood Castle, under the care of his domestic chaplain, he might also catch Lord Crawley napping by throwing him off his guard.

If unsuccessful in this object, his eloquence was not wholly thrown away. The colonel and the general listened with their eyes, ears, and mouths; and at the close of every neatly-turned sentence, nodded approvingly to each other, as much as to say, "With such men as this in Parliament, how can the affairs of the country go amiss! Long live the Conservative interest and the Constitution! Long live Church and State, army and navy, the queen and the British Grenadiers!"

"There's a head to settle a frontier treaty for you!" murmured Colonel Hamilton to Sir Robert, who had been tasting a fifth kind of claret.

"There's a conscience to intrust with our lives and liberties, our consols and exchequer-bills!" was the rejoinder, or thereabout, of the K.C.B., who was topping up with curaçoa. And by the time they reached the drawing-room, both were in that mood of ineffable content produced by the digestion of a dinner too perfect to engender remorse in the stomach by the fumes of the mel-lowest of wine and mildest of sophistry. At

that moment, had either of them had in his pocket twenty thousand lacs of rupees for investment, he would have placed it in the hands of Hamlyn the banker with as little hesitation as in those of St. Paul.

By the peculiar manner in which Lord Crawley looked about him as they traversed the hall to go to coffee, as if to ascertain that his great-coat and servants were in attendance for immediate departure so soon as he should have made his bow to his hostess, Hamlyn perceived that there was some serious call on the time of the minister; that he was going either to a cabinet council or the opera. Hoping to nail him as they proceeded together up stairs, while Hamilton and Maitland paused to admire a princely stand of exotics on the landing-place, he attempted to enter into conversation.

"Flimflam was not as good as usual to-day!" said he, in the apologetic tone in which a host alludes to a bottle of corked claret. "Flimflam never tells in a party where he has no confederate to whom to throw the ball. He requires a chum, just as a juggler requires his clown. Flimflam cannot carry off a party on his single shoulders."

"I believe he is an able man in his profession," observed Lord Crawley, vacantly, attaching no more importance to a man so politically unimportant as Flimflam than to Ramsay the butler. Then, as they entered the drawing-room together, he drew off his host towards an inner boudoir, where a fire was blazing, and the caricatures of H. B. lying scattered, for the recreation of loungers; aware that a *tête-à-tête* in which one of the *têtes* is that of a secretary of state, is as sacred from intrusion as the *tête-à-tête* of a pair of engaged lovers.

"I need not tell you, my dear Hamlyn," said he, opening the palaver in an off-hand way, "that I gave immediate attention to the object of your letter of yesterday. I am half inclined to quarrel with you, by-the-way, that the first thing you have ever asked me to attempt for you should lie so thoroughly out of my department as to afford any possibility of failure. Consulships, as you are well aware, lie wholly at the disposal of the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, as you justly observed in your note, my interference might exercise a secondary influence; and I therefore lost no time in addressing myself to my noble colleague. I need not remind you, however, that we are obliged to observe excessive punctilio in this sort of interference, or the patronage of no office would be sacred."

"Believe me, I am most sensible of your kindness," replied Hamlyn, satisfied that a consularship asked for by her majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department was as good as granted.

"Not at all, my dear sir! You have claims upon the courtesy of government, independent of the still warmer ties of private friendship which unite you with myself!" replied Lord Crawley, with a becoming recollection of the number of braces of pheasants he had bagged at Dean Park, and looking as benignant as became so high an official. "As far as regards my own feelings, I need not tell you that any request of yours, in my power to grant, would be granted *unconditionally*. But, as I said before, this thing is entirely and absolutely out of my department."

"The application, then, was unsuccessful?" inquired Hamlyn, in a low voice, feeling as if

all the claret and grapes he had been swallowing were suddenly acidulating within him.

"Unsuccessful is scarcely the word. Encumbered as the hands of her majesty's government are at the present moment, by long-existing pledges and serious obligations—"

Hamlyn's hopes sunk lower and lower at this plausible preamble. Already he felt in his eyes the dust about to be thrown into them by ministerial circumlocution.

"Encumbered as we are, I say, and forced, as it were, to divide by a miracle five barley-loaves and three small fishes among a hungering multitude, it becomes impossible for us to consider our several leanings and inclinations. When reminded of this by my friend, the foreign secretary, I did not fail to put forward your claims as a zealous supporter of the administration, as well as the least importunate of our parliamentary succours. I leave you to guess what was his reply."

"I fear I am too little skilled in the mysteries of patronage to conjecture!" observed the crest-fallen banker.

"Nay, there was no political trickery in it. All was as straightforward as if issuing from your Temple of the Mammon of unrighteousness, Threadneedle-street. His lordship's policy is as practical as Lear's—'nothing for nothing!' In one word, he told me that it was reported we had everything to fear from you on the foreign securities' question; and that, in the event of your petition being granted, we must have your pledge to support this as well as all other government measures."

Richard Hamlyn was conscious of an involuntary clinching of his hands as he listened. The measure in question (to which, with the fear of a treasury prosecution before our eyes, a fictitious name and nature has been assigned) was one of his political pets, the only point on which he differed from the views of the party with which he was as closely amalgamated as a Smyrna fig to the fellow-figs in its drum, because the only political question that happened to hedge upon his private interests. He had cultivated it as a favourite plant; watered it, pruned it, supported it with sticks. Whenever it was before the House, he felt inspired; and it was in the maintenance of this darling measure that he had indulged in those ebullitions of petulance to which allusion was formerly made. In city meetings, composed of the friends of its policy, he was invariably called into the chair. It was his department, as much as Ireland is that of O'Connell, factory martyrdom of Lord Ashley, or quarantine of Tydus Pooh-pooh! To abjure, to recant, was as for Peter to deny his master; and with a sense of magnanimity he had not experienced since he last figured on the Barsthorpe hustings as "Hamlyn, the friend of the poor," he prepared to reject the flagitious proposition of government, and renounce the consulship of Tangier.

At that moment, however, there rose up clear and distinct before him, as the spectrum said to haunt the solitude of a late premier, a human head, a bald head, the head of Spilsby, the clerk; producing in that warm and elegant chamber a far more glacial effect than the death's-head of the Egyptian feasts! To rid himself of the haunting of such a presence, he felt that he would have renounced all that Faustus is said to have assigned away by post-orbit, to the Evil One of old.

Another minute, and the bargain was struck. Virtue was gone out of the banker, and the disposal of one of her majesty's richest consulships in his hands.

"This office is, I presume, to be filled by some near relative of your own, since you attach so much importance to it?" said Lord Crawley, inwardly chuckling, as Delilah had done while beholding the strength of her victim cut off, and lying scattered at her feet.

"It is for one who has served me and my family faithfully for a period of twenty years!" responded the banker; and Crawley, whose word was pledged whether this faithful servant happened to be Ramsay the banker's butler or one of his coach-horses, felt a little anxious for farther information.

Though unaddicted to the weakness of astonishment, he was greatly surprised to find his friend Hamlyn of so humane a disposition as to be content to sacrifice the valuable services of the faithfullest head-clerk in the universe to the desire of procuring him an independence. Attributing the Downing-street policy of "Nothing for nothing," even to the unministerial residue of the human race, he could not help surmising that the future consul must have rendered inordinate services to the banker, to suggest such excess of self-sacrifice!

The equivalent, however, whatever it might be, was no affair of his. If the future consul of Tangier had withdrawn his opposition from some Lombard-street measure, promising for the future to keep his long speeches against the question in his pocket, and himself out of the chair, the balance of counting-house power and obligation was no affair of the Home Office. With emulsive urbanity, therefore, he now took leave; and the two old soldiers, who had been watching the interview through the folding-doors, could scarcely restrain their reverence for the banker, whose opinion Lord Crawley had evidently been sifting with deference, and whom they half surmised had received offers of office, the chancellorship of the exchequer, for aught they knew to the contrary.

While glancing round the drawing-room, so much more splendidly furnished than that of Ormeau, and allowing their eyes to rest at last upon the grave, mild, Canning-looking man of whom the home secretary was so gratefully pressing the hand at parting, they felt proud of human nature and themselves, that merit and worth should find so noble a level, in the first commercial country in the universe! Ahem!

That night was the very longest to Richard Hamlyn he had ever spent, save the 16th of December every year, ere he was sixteen years of age, when breaking up for the Christmas holidays was depending on the daybreak of the morrow. Ere the cheeping of those callow blackbirds, the London chimney-sweeps, had commenced in the streets, he was astir, and for the first time in his life chided the groom in charge of his cabriolet for announcing himself to be at the door two minutes and a half after the half hour!

Unapt as he was to indulge in pleasantries, fain would he have parodied Imogen's invocation with

"Oh! for a cab with wings, to bear me in its sides to Lombard-street!"

Vainly did poor Miss Creswell apply for a few minutes' interview, prior to his departure, in order to acquaint him with the result of her

conference in New-Norfolk-street, the preceding day. Unable to express to the decorous governor the indecorous wish that rose to his lips, concerning a journey he sincerely wished to send her at that moment, he contented himself with graciously begging to postpone their interview to the evening.

"Oh! that Strand! that long, long Strand, with its coal-carts, wagons, drays, its intrusive churches thrusting themselves forward, like highwaymen, to arrest the passenger; its Temple Bar, its thousand of meaningless incumbances. Never had he felt the throng and pressure of Fleet-street so importunate as that morning. His breath was oppressed; his heart almost ceased to beat under the shifting greatness of his emotions.

At length he stopped before his own door; and the groom accustomed to deposite him there three hundred and eleven days in the year, could scarcely understand how it happened that the banker omitted his usual parting phrase of, "You will be here at half past four." He could not surmise that there was no such thing for his master, at that moment, as time or place; that he knew not Lombard-street from Cavendish Square, or four o'clock post meridian from four o'clock ante.

Nevertheless, Richard Hamlyn contrived to subdue his outward mien to a degree of decency becoming the occasion. He entered the counting-house with the same air he would have assumed in entering the Orvington Infirmary, or Orvington Church on Christmas day, or the library of Ormeau, at any time of the year; an humble consciousness of the power of doing good attenuating his habitually grave countenance.

Five minutes afterward, instead of waiting for the ordinary torturing knock and intrusion of the baldheaded clerk, he coolly desired one of the quill-driving subs, who brought in his silver standish duly replenished, to acquaint Mr. Spilsby he wished to speak with him; and when Spilsby came, and beheld the banker standing on the hearth-rug, with his coat-tails upturned, master of himself, and apparently about to proclaim himself master of those in his employ, he felt sure that some lucky stockbroking stroke had righted the house; and that the firm of Hamlyn and Co. was solvent as that of Cousts.

"I have sent for you, Spilsby," said Richard Hamlyn, "to communicate to you a piece of agreeable news—agreeable news, which the interest created in your favour in my mind by twenty years of laborious and faithful service renders doubly gratifying to my feelings."

Spilsby, who possessed an infirm cousin in the North, from whom he had great expectations, entertaining little doubt that Spilsby, of Newcastle, was gone for ever, leaving his shares in the Wallsend Company to his nearest of kin, sank into a chair. Just as agitated as his unfortunate employer had been every time he entered that private room for the last eighteen months, the clerk was becoming in his turn.

"I am aware," pursued Hamlyn, in a tone that would have done honour to the Treasurer of the Philanthropic Institution, while addressing the patrons of the charity, at an annual dinner, "I am aware, my dear Spilsby, that you have a large family; and that, in these times, a large family is not maintained for nothing. I do not mean to call your salary in this house nothing; but four hundred per annum scarcely affords the means of effecting those assurances on your life

essential to the well-being of a numerous family hereafter."

Poor Spilsby felt himself revive painfully. His cousin was *not* dead! There would be no occasion for all this fudge on the part of the head of the firm, to announce to him that he was come into a little family property.

"In short, Spilsby," resumed Richard Hamlyn, "having taken all these things into my consideration; and having, I am happy to say, some trifling claim upon the good offices of the present government, I have been so fortunate as to obtain for you a far more lucrative, as well as more honourable employment, than that of remaining all your days a banking-house clerk. On Saturday night, you will be gazetted her majesty's consul at Tangier."

Less practised than the banker in the arts of simulation, the astonished clerk instantly started to his feet.

Nominated, without solicitation, to a consulship, a consulship that would remove him so far from home, that would exile him from his native country!

"The salary is between seven and eight hundred a year," added Hamlyn. "The climate salubrious—the duty light—"

"Seven hundred a year?" murmured Spilsby; "expand his parliamentary interest to the value of between seven and eight hundred a year, or ten thousand pounds? The mystery, whatever it be, is worth thirty thousand to him, at the least farthing."

"I am infinitely indebted to you, Mr. Hamlyn, sir," he resumed aloud, rising respectfully from his seat, to resume the attitude of clerkly subordination—"indebted to you to a degree my poor heart might vainly attempt to express. Your most merited goodness, sir, is a thing which, I trust, will never be forgotten by me or mine. But—"

Richard Hamlyn gasped for breath at this ominous conjunction.

"My family prospects are of a more cheering nature than you have the means to conjecture. I have relations well to do in the world, whose good-will towards me is mainly supported by knowing me to occupy a situation of trust in one of the first establishments in the moneyed world, and who would resent my leaving England. I have no ambition to become independent. I shall be content to live and die, sir, attached to the house."

Almost spasmodically, the banker wiped from his forehead a rising dew; and Spilsby, seeing his advantage, peered out significantly from under his overhanging eyebrows, as he proceeded.

"So long as the firm exists, Mr. Hamlyn, so long as the house remains open, I hope to be found at my post. I can never be happier than as the faithful servant of the most upright and honourable of masters. Permit me, therefore, without a moment's hesitation, respectfully to decline the lucrative appointment you have thus generously procured me upon the coast of Africa."

It was now the turn of Richard Hamlyn to sink unmanned into the chair.

CHAPTER XVII.

"My 'right honourable' daughter!"

NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

DISTRACTED as Mrs. Hamlyn had been by apprehensions of various kinds at the moment of

her return to town, her well-regulated mind became gradually restored to composure on observing the perfect self-possession of her husband, his unmitigated attention to his parliamentary duties, and a thousand minor evidences of the cessation of all pressure in his affairs. The crisis, from whatever cause it might have arisen, was evidently passed. Under such circumstances, even the methodical regularity of her household proved an advantage, soothing her spirits as by the measured rocking of a lullaby.

Moreover, all was so bright, so prosperous, so sunshiny around her, that it seemed absurd to look out for breakers when launched on that glassy sea, and under a sky so propitious. Flattering as was her position in London life, the banker's wife had never felt the value of her acceptance in society till called upon to present her daughter. The kindness with which Lydia was welcomed into the world filled her mother with gratitude towards the frivolous circles she had hitherto regarded with indifference; and she had the satisfaction to perceive that the girl so flatteringly noticed in compliment to her parents soon became a general favourite from her own merits. Seldom had a *débutante* equally lovely appeared in the *beau-monde* so free from the affectations of the day; and the fashionable world, forewarned in her favour by Lady Rotherwood (who, having taken a fancy for her at Dean Park, and having no children of her own to occupy her attention, was doubly interested in her success in life), accorded to Mrs. Hamlyn a new species of consideration as the mother of the most popular beauty of the season.

At all this Mrs. Hamlyn could afford to rejoice; for she saw that the adulation of the world exercised no evil influence on the disposition of her right-minded child; that by the maturity of Lydia, she had gained a friend; that, in whatever circle they found themselves, she was the first object to her daughter; that her slightest opinion outweighed the whole chorus of flatterers and adorers; and that she had only to appear thoughtful or indispensed, to impose an instantaneous sadness upon the lighthearted young girl. Her perception of this determined the banker's wife to exert herself to the utmost to appear cheerful and contented, while escorting her daughter to those scenes of fashionable resort, in which it was Mr. Hamlyn's desire they should attain an honourable distinction.

For there existed a source of anxiety which rendered it difficult for the affectionate mother to array herself in smiles for the opera or ball-room. Aware that the submission of her son Henry to his father's requirements had been a matter of compulsion, she was not slow to discern, from the tone of his correspondence, that he was giving way to despondency. As much as the pride of the banker was centered in the prospects of his eldest son, was that of Mrs. Hamlyn embarked in Harry's high reputation and noble elevation of character. She revered almost as much as she loved this child of her affections; and while noticing with anxiety the growing incoherency of his letters, felt indescribably mortified in the conviction that, by the relaxation of his efforts and infirmity of his health, he was about to disappoint the well-known confidence of the university in his power.

Aware, from certain harsh expressions hazarded by her husband at the moment of Henry's

refractoriness, that Mr. Hamlyn was out of conceit of the academic honours which he regarded as the origin of his second son's conceiving himself too accomplished a gentleman for Lombard-street, it was not to him she could turn for comfort in her cares; and whenever letters arrived bearing the Cambridge postmark (how different in style, in spirits, nay, even in handwriting, from those she had received from the exulting traveller during his Italian expedition!), all she could do was to retreat in silence to her room, and weep unsolicited over the blighted prospects of the most gifted of her children.

For such indulgence of her feelings, however, she had little leisure. Day after day, evening after evening, the anxious mother had engagements to keep. No fashionable party was considered complete without the presence of the beautiful Miss Hamlyn, whose healthy, happy, intelligent countenance seemed to renovate the consciousness of youth and enjoyment for all whose hearts were brightened by her smiles. The table in Cavendish Square was covered with invitations; and at the first royal ball given after Lydia's presentation at court, the wife and lovely daughter of the member for Barsthorpe were noticed by the papers as having attracted universal admiration.

Richard Hamlyn's desire that his family should maintain a distinguished place in the fashionable world was, consequently, gratified—perhaps exceeded. All he ambitioned was that his wife and daughter should reflect credit upon the firm of Hamlyn and Co., and assist in the support of that aerial fabric which through life he had been labouring to uphold. That they would do more, he neither calculated nor desired. Like most people whose attention is absorbed by a vital interest, he had no thought to bestow on collateral projects. All he had cared for during the last five-and-twenty years, was to preserve the credit of a ruined family, and save from the Gazette—by fair means or foul—an insolvent firm; and, engrossed by the fatal nature of his expedients, had not leisure to indulge in any luxury or complication of ambitions. It had never struck him, for instance, while labouring to gild the worldly prospects of the future Hamlyns of Dean Park, that the name might derive lustre from the brilliant marriage of his daughter.

The only brother of the banker was a dignitary of the Church, who rarely quitted his preferment in the county of Durham. His sisters were married in a moderate sphere of life—the one residing also in the North, the other in Devonshire; and, accustomed to regard the alliances of his family with unexulting eyes, he had always settled it with himself that Lydia and Harriet would become the wives of country gentlemen, or mercantile men of solid condition. To aspire beyond this would have been at variance with his plans.

When, therefore, soon after Lydia's *début*, he found her attract to his house a higher order of guests than had yet sought his acquaintance, he was more startled than pleased. It appeared inconceivable to the banker that personal distinction should accrue to him from so insignificant a source! Nor, absorbed as he was at that moment by personal cares of the most poignant nature, had he yet found time to accommodate his views to the new position of his family, when the startling intelligence was communicated by his wife, that the Marquis of Dantford

requested permission to pay his addresses to their daughter!

The proposals were made in the most flattering manner. A letter from the marchioness was delivered by her sister, Lady Rotherwood, to the banker's wife, fully authorizing the views of her son, to whom her consent had been applied for at the moment of her recent convalescence. All she requested, in the event of his being so fortunate as to make himself acceptable to one described by various members of her family as the most charming girl in England, was, that the marriage should be delayed till the expiration of Gerald's minority, early in the ensuing month of June.

It was one night, on returning from a ministerial party, and learning that Mr. Hamlyn was still up and writing in his study, that this intelligence was communicated by his wife.

"Ramsay informed me you were busy writing?" said Mrs. Hamlyn, almost hesitating whether to enter the room, on perceiving that the banker's table was covered with papers.

"I have only been half an hour returned from the House, and have letters to answer!" was his cold reply; for it was an understood thing that none of the family were to intrude upon his retirement, unless by special invitation. When, therefore, he saw his wife, unabashed by his abruptness, quietly take her seat by the fireside, in spite of the lateness of the hour and the full dress of which it was time to disencumber herself, he felt that something important must have transpired; and almost dreaded lest, through the indiscretion of Lord Crawley and gossiping of Lady Rotherwood, something might have reached his wife of his extraordinary solicitations in Spilsby's favour, and their still more extraordinary frustration by the opposition of the clerk.

This unpleasant surmise was strengthened by the first words uttered by Mrs. Hamlyn.

"You have perhaps been already apprized by Lord Crawley," said she, "of the circumstance for which Lady Rotherwood this morning afforded me some preparation?"

Satisfied that the mischief was done, the banker was nerving himself to rebut, by harsh reproof, any comments or inquiries his wife might seem disposed to hazard on an affair peculiarly within his province, both as a man of business and politician; when, little aware of the alarm she had excited, Mrs. Hamlyn hastened to explain herself; and the intelligence struck with double force upon the father's mind, after the humiliating panic by which it had been preceded! For once, he was overpowered by natural emotion.

To accord his unqualified consent was a matter of course. All that was at present required of him was to sanction the more familiar visits at his house of the noble suitor; Mrs. Hamlyn having conditioned with the young lover that no positive answer should be exacted from Lydia till a month's intimate companionship enabled her to judge the nature of their mutual impressions. Scarcely another father in London, however, but, under such circumstances, would have been moved to seek an interview with his daughter, in order, before he slept, to congratulate her upon her brilliant prospects, and fold more tenderly and anxiously to his heart the girl thus trembling on the verge of womanhood with its matronly responsibilities. But Hamlyn, with his wonted circumspection,

contented himself with expressing to his wife his conviction that so "capital a match" would in the sequel be circumvented by the interference of prudent friends; or by the natural fickleness of a boy of Lord Dartford's age, for whose hand all the mothers and chaperons in London were barefacedly manœuvring.

"Do not let Lydia set her heart upon it!" was his parting counsel, as his wife, after due discussion of the measures to be adopted on the morrow, prepared to retire for the night. "I have a presentiment that something will occur to blight so brilliant a prospect. The thing is too preposterous—too utterly out of our sphere—and will raise up against us too many enemies and animosities, to admit of hoping that all will end as we desire. Tell her, however, that nothing shall be neglected on my part to forward her interests on the occasion."

Alas! it was not on her "interests" that either Lydia or her thoughtful mother were intent at that moment! At such an epoch of her life, the young girl wished to find herself folded for the first time with paternal warmth to the heart of her father; and deep was Mrs. Hamlyn's mortification at having to return to the dressing-room, where her daughter was anxiously awaiting her, unaccompanied by him who, as the comptroller of the destinies of the family, ought also to have been the leading influence of its affections.

"Your father, dearest, gives his gratified consent, and will in all things second our wishes!" said Mrs. Hamlyn, in a subdued voice, unwilling to damp the joy of the agitated girl by a more explicit transmission of his message.

"But he is pleased with Lord Dartford's conduct on the occasion?" persisted Lydia. "He feels as you do, dearest mother, that nothing can have been more feeling or considerate than his conduct towards us all throughout the affair?"

"Your father expressed the highest opinion of him, and his unqualified approval. As Walter's friend, Lord Dartford has long commanded an interest in Mr. Hamlyn's mind. To-morrow, at dinner, they will meet, and everything be mutually expressed which can confirm this friendly feeling."

"To-morrow, at dinner!" thought Lydia, whose young heart was naturally excited to unusual emotions of tenderness by all that was passing. "What! not one day's respite from business—not one day's abstinence from the city—to afford his countenance and support to his daughter at such a moment!"

Moderate, however, as was the banker's avowal of surprise and triumph in presence of his wife, no sooner had he bolted himself anew within the privacy of his study, than he gave way to the wildest emotion. His daughter a marchioness! The grand-daughter of Walter Hamlyn the banker—a marchioness! In the enjoyment of forty thousand a year—high precedence—noble estates—gorgeous jewels—all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious rank! The name of Hamlyn, of Dean Park, about to be connected with the hereditary peerage of the realm! What would the Vernons say; and how, henceforward, would the Elvaston family preserve their frigid distance? Already, he seemed to behold the future Marquis and Marchioness of Dartford arriving in triumph at Ormeau!

"My father would have been proud indeed

had he lived to see this day!" naturally escaped him. But those words and that inauspicious name recalled him to the bitterer realities of life! An involuntary shudder betrayed the sudden chill arresting the unusual expansion of his heart, as he reflected on all he had to fear, on all that might overtake both him and his during the interval to elapse before this splendid alliance could be accomplished! The consciousness which, for years past, had tinged with bitterness the luscious cup of his enjoyments every time he attempted to raise it to his lips, exercised its usual influence; and the head of the ambitious banker, which for a moment had uplifted itself with proud and gratifying anticipations, was again humbled to the dust. For he knew that a touch, a word, a whisper, might at any moment destroy the glittering fabric of his fortunes, and overwhelm beneath its ruins himself and all who bore his name!

In the anguish of his heart, he now cursed the rashness which had induced him to make his recent overtures to government, ere certain of reaping the fruits of his self-abasement; and the surprise with which Lord Crawley had a few days before received his announcement that the person for whom he had so eagerly solicited the consulship was prevented by unforeseen circumstances from profiting by the concession, recurred disagreeably to his mind.

"This clerk of yours, my dear Hamlyn, must have a prodigious idea of the advantages to be derived from sticking to your strong box!" said he, with a smile. "Your patronage, I suspect, carries more weight with it than ours. However, having, through your propositions, placed my paw upon this little windfall, I shall clinch it fast for one of my nephews—a poor Honourable with a wife and half a dozen children, who is not quite so sure as this Mr. Spilsby of yours, of the crumbs that fall from the table of Hamlyn and Co.!"

Every syllable of this, though uttered at random, spoke daggers to the diseased mind of the banker. Imputing undue significance to the idle banter of a man whose success in political life was mainly owing to the pungent pleasantness and slapdash recklessness of his parliamentary eloquence, Richard Hamlyn trembled to reflect that he whose suspicions were thus unlookingly awakened was uncle to the Marquis of Dartford!

On the morrow, however, he had so far recovered his presence of mind, and chalked out the path to pursue, as to bear his part, in the aptest manner, in the ceremonial of receiving Lord Dartford for the first time in the character of a son-in-law; and the young lovers, already gratified by the affectionate warmth of Mrs. Hamlyn and triumphant joy of Walter, had no fault to find with the calmer but scarcely less strongly-expressed approval of the banker.

The whole establishment in Cavendish Square seemed suddenly startled into life, as by the touch of the torch of Prometheus, by this surprising glorification. Already, Lady Rotherwood had confided it in strictest secrecy to a sufficient number of intimate friends to secure the report being bruited through all the clubs of the West End; while Captain Hamlyn was, on his part, too deeply interested that it should reach the ears of Lord and Lady Vernon to oppose a *very* firm contradiction to the rumour. That it *did* reach their ears, a very few days sufficed to demonstrate. Apprehensive that

their bitter disappointment on the occasion might be suspected, and expose them to ridicule, Lucinda and her mother hastened with their congratulations to Cavendish Square; as if of opinion that they could not efface by too prompt or too servile assiduity their previous stigma towards the long-contemned family at Dean Park.

No sooner, however, was it understood in the coteries of London that an engagement between the beautiful *débütante*, "the lovely and accomplished Miss Hamlyn," and the young Marquis of Dartford was avowed by all parties, than malice began to whet the weapons usually exercised on such occasions by the idle and malicious; the former to divert their leisure—the latter to gratify their spite. Not a dowager at Almack's but whispered confidentially to her sister chaperons that "the young marquis had been shamefully taken in—that he was not of age—a mere boy—a mere *child*—weak in intellect, though strong in wilfulness; whereas the Hamlyns were crafty, artful people, who from his boyhood had been trying to entrap him; profiting for the purpose by the influence of their eldest son over the poor lad—first as his Eton fag, afterward as his cornet in the Blues. The whole was a scheme—a cunning scheme—devised among these presuming *parvenus*! The artful banker, conniving with the manœuvring mother, had compelled their vain, silly son to bring down this young nobleman perpetually to Dean Park, where Miss Hamlyn was incessantly thrown in his way; till, in the sequel, they would not hear of the marquis's quitting the house before he had made formal proposals to the young lady."

Such was the mendacious version of the affair sanctioned by the smiles and nods of the Vernons wherever they went; Lord Vernon having accused himself at Brooks's of being the most unfortunate of mankind—not because his wife was again unsuccessful in netting a marquis, but because this disproportioned alliance of the Hamlyn family would thrust them forward so offensively in the county, that he feared he should be no longer able to overlook the vicinity of Dean Park to the Hyde!

There were those, it is true, who, moved by the genuine representations of Lady Rotherwood, viewed the affair in a more legitimate light; and saw that it was precisely *because* she had never been forced upon his notice, that the young marquis, proud of his own good taste in discovering the merits of the natural and unpretending Lydia, had resolved to assert his independence of the flimsy prejudices of fashionable fastidiousness by making her his wife. Others, warned by their parental experience, applauded the wisdom of the Dartford family in according their unhesitating consent to a respectable marriage; considering that the marquis was an only son, the last of his race, and with a sufficient tendency towards the break-neck and knocker-wrenching exploits of the day, to render his early settlement in life a matter of first-rate importance.

Meanwhile, all was happiness in Cavendish Square! Few spots and few moments more bright and auspicious than the home of opulent parents, under the excitement of the happy betrothment of a beloved daughter! On all sides, congratulations—gifts—flowers—the affectionate welcome and professions of new connexions, and the triumphant joy of old! Mrs. Hamlyn,

instead of lamenting the premature settlement in life that was to deprive her of her daughter's company, felt inexpressibly relieved by the certainty of placing her Lydia in a happy home, under the protection of an adoring husband, instead of seeing her exposed to the precarious chances of her present fortunes. Walter was almost wild with delight at a connexion purchased by no degrading sacrifices, yet at once securing happiness to his sister and support to his own projects of alliance; while Henry wrote from Cambridge an expression of melancholy delight that at least *one* member of his family was happy and prosperous.

Even poor Miss Creswell lost sight of the fate of her annuity, in the expectation of beholding her beloved pupil a marchioness; and when Lydia's letter, announcing her perfect happiness, reached Burlington Manor (accompanied by a few lines from Lord Dartford, containing arch allusions to the sledge-party, and a certain dried branch of Arabian jessamine, which existed, and was to exist so long as he lived, in his pocket-book, after having originally flourished and been presented to him, in the conservatory at Burlington), the good old colonel not only shed tears of joy at the news, but protested that the moment he had got through his engagements to his neighbours at the Vicarage, Ormeau, and Gratwicke House, he would hurry up to town to bestow his blessings upon the kind-hearted and lovely girl, who was dear to him almost as a daughter.

"You must bear me company, Ellen," said he, "and make my little Lydia's acquaintance. I have always been in hopes you would come to love each other as sisters. Though you weren't over and above civil to the young captain when he was at Dean, you had certainly so far an excuse, that whatever attention you might show to *him*, you were obliged to extend to the marquis. However, 'tis some comfort, at all events, that you agree with me in thinking young Dartford a trumpery—a fine, free-hearted young fellow—gentleman to the backbone! So the sooner we go and offer our congratulations to poor dear Mrs. Hamlyn (who won't know whether to laugh or cry at losing such a daughter, bless her poor heart! and gaining such a son-in-law) the better. I'm free to own that I love to see two young folks a-courting, when there's nothing likely to thwart their courtship; and as you won't promise me the pleasure of any billing and cooing by my *own* fireside, faith, I must go and make the best use of my spectacles at my friend Hamlyn's!"

Opportunity for observation was certainly not wanting; for every day, punctual to the moment sanctioned by Mrs. Hamlyn, the marquis's Brougham drove up to the door; and it would have been difficult to decide which looked the brighter, gayer, or sweeter—the young lover, or the bouquet of rare flowers with which he came provided to propitiate the happy Lydia. Till the hour arrived for Lydia to ride with her brother Walter, or drive with her mother, Lord Dartford remained, listening to her sweet singing or sweeter conversation. Dinner-time brought him again, when no engagements interfered, to rejoin the family circle for the remainder of the day.

It is true, the family circle was rarely a private one; and now, in addition to Mr. Hamlyn's usual formal dinner-parties and political banquets, it became necessary to return the series

of entertainments by which Lord Dartford's family chose to mark their approval of a match, which, unable to prevent, they were wise enough to take the merit of sanctioning. In addition to Lady Rotherwood, who really loved both her nephew and the object of his choice, and rejoiced in their prospects of happiness, a variety of noble cousins made eager interest for the eventual civilities of Dartford Hall, by the promptitude of their attentions to the future bride; and day after day did the Morning Post record, for the edification of the polite world, that the "Duke and Duchess of This, or Earl and Countess of That, with the Earl and Countess of Rotherwood, the Marquis of Dartford, and Lord Crawley, had honoured Mr. Hamlyn with their company to dinner, at his mansion in Cavendish Square."

"Did you ever see anything to equal the pretensions of those Hamlyns!" was now the cry of Lady Bondwell and her class. "See how they have gradually wormed themselves into the very highest place in the fashionable world! Step by step, how all their progress has been calculated! How cunningly must they have crawled, and crept, and smiled, and whispered, to stock their acquaintance with a sufficient quantity of lords and ladies to enable them to cut all their old friends! First, they pushed their son in the world, that the son might push his sister; and the children, having established themselves so brilliantly in life, will push on their parents in return!"

"Ay, ay, ay!" was Sir Benjamin Bondwell's reply to these insinuations of his indignant spouse; "but you won't get me out of Russell Square a day the sooner for that! I know the cost of these lordly acquaintances to a banker. One must pay through the nose for a duke, and be out of pocket many a long hundred to secure a pack of royal highnesses to the list of one's fêtes, after the fashion of that poor deluded man, Hamlyn. 'Keep your shop, and your shop will keep you' says the proverb; but while-keeping such cursed fine company, a banker has a hard matter to keep himself out of the Gazette! They tell me Hamlyn's to be made a baronet in the next batch! Why not a peer at once? A lord, on 'change, would be a novelty! If I *did* sell myself to government, it should not be too cheap!"

But Lady Bondwell, as the lady-consort of a mere Peg-Nicholson-knight, was overwhelmed at the idea of having to yield precedence to Lady Hamlyn.

"'Tis a hard matter to guess *where* their ambition will stop!" cried she. "But I've heard of people who, by putting all their silver into the tankard, had nothing left to drink in it when 'twas turned out of the mould."

By the expiration of the month, at the end of which Lord Dartford was enabled to announce to his mother the certainty of her speedily becoming a dowager—since he was an accepted man, and happier in Lydia's affections than in his numberless sources of earthly happiness—a thousand ill-natured attacks had been made in the Sunday papers, and other outlets of the envy, hatred, and malice of society, upon the *mésalliance* of the young marquis, and the presumption of a banker's family in pretending to commingle its three emblematic balls of Lombardy with those of a coronet!

Unused, in the respectable obscurity of his earlier days, to this species of notoriety, Richard

Hamlyn shrunk in agony from the blistering touch of the branding-iron, and even performed a pilgrimage to the house of the solicitors to whom he had referred Miss Creswell and her annuity, to consult them respecting the prosecution of the offenders. But Messrs. Wigwell and Slack had, fortunately, sufficient business of the firm of Hamlyn and Co. already on their hands to be able to dispense with the job; and, consequently, disinterestedly advised the banker to pocket the affront of being called a banker, in English somewhat less courtly than that he was in the habit of hearing at his dinner-table in Cavendish Square.

"The operation of clearing out a cesspool," observed the shrewd lawyer, "though essential to the well-being of the community, is often fatal to those who charge themselves with the disagreeable duty. As the prosecutor of one of these prints, you will have to suffer a thousandfold more indignities than by allowing them an occasional fling at you. I recommend you to compound for the lesser evil. A character, such as yours, my dear sir, a name which sheds lustre on the man who bears it, a renown for integrity and worth such as few noblemen but would barter their coronets to obtain, may well enable you to hear a few idle twittings concerning your connexion with Lombard-street."

At this exposition, Mr. Hamlyn, as in gratitude bound, extended his hand to his solicitor, and a squeeze of becoming fervour and duration was exchanged between them; although the banker was every way entitled to a prodigality of praise measured out to him, per Lincoln's Inn tariff, at a ratio of thirteen and fourpence per fudge.

A far more interesting subject, meanwhile, was beginning to occupy, for his behoof, the attention of his legal delegate. The solicitors of the Marchioness of Dartford had forwarded to them, immediately after the formal betrothment of the young couple, a *précis* of the liberal intentions of the young bridegroom; and it was, of course, more agreeable to examine, with Messrs. Wigwell and Slack, a schedule of the splendid and unencumbered Dartford property, than to grope in the mysteries of the newspaper press.

On all sides, the matrimonial plot was thickening. The noble invalid from Dartford Hall arrived in town, to make the acquaintance of her future daughter-in-law; while Colonel Hamilton was hourly expected at Fenton's with his, to become an eyewitness of the general happiness. All was mirth, and promise of mirth, in Cavendish Square.

There was some difficulty in recognising, under its present brilliant and aristocratic aspect, the sober dulness which, for so many years, had enveloped the methodical household of Hamlyn the banker!

CHAPTER XVIII.

"It were better to meet some dangers half way, though they come nothing near, than to keep too long a watch upon their approaches: for if a man watch too long, it is odds he will fall asleep."—BACON.

"I HOPE and trust my young friend the marquis won't be jealous, my dear, when he hears that your mother (who stopped the carriage just now to welcome me to Lon'on, at the corner of Holles-street), told me I should find you alone, and gave me warrant for a *tête-à-tête*?"

"Gerald is very indulgent at present," replied Miss Hamlyn, with a smile. "These are courtship days, you know! I will not promise you, dearest Colonel Hamilton, that he will allow me to tell you a year hence, how truly glad I am to be again sitting by your side!"

"I must try and keep him in good-humour with me, by some more Lion-hunts!" said the colonel, laughing. "As you say, these are courtship-days; and I couldn't help feeling glad, my dear, when I heard they were to be spun out a bit, by making you wait for the wedding! For even in the happiest marriages, wedlock has as many thorns as courtship roses."

"Are you trying to cast a gloom upon my bright prospects?"

"Rather, my dear Lydia, to put you into conceit with the old marchioness's whimsicality."

"I assure you that among the many kind things Lady Dartford has done towards me," she replied, "her postponement of our wedding has been the kindest. Gerald and I are allowed to see each other daily; and I do not mind saying to you, who so dearly love and appreciate my best of mothers, that I should not have been happy to leave her here alone, till Harry is established at home to keep her company. My sister will be two years longer in the school-room; and my father's time, between the banking-house in the morning and House of Commons at night, is so thoroughly taken up, that I fear dear mamma would miss me, unless Harry were at hand to take my place."

"Why, to say the truth, I fancied just now that Mrs. Hamlyn looked a little paler and thinner than usual. Though she said a thousand fine things about her new son-in-law, I fancied I saw tears in her eyes!"

"Not on *our* account—for I can assure you that she is beginning to love Lord Dartford as if he were a child of her own! And so she ought, for it is impossible to be more dutifully attached than he is to mamma. But I fear she is uneasy about Harry."

"What the deuce! the senior wrangler has not been turning restiff again, has he? not been bitten anew, with the bankerphobia, I hope?"

"Poor mamma fancies he is ill and unhappy, because he has written to prepare her for being deeply mortified at the result of his approaching examination."

"Why, 'tisn't that frets her, I hope? Surely a woman surrounded with every earthly blessing can afford to dispense with a few cheers in the Cambridge Senate House, for one of her sons?"

"Not when their absence is a proof of his spirit being broken, as in the present instance. With Henry's brilliant abilities, it is impossible not to attribute the sudden change in his college standing to the disgusts by which his mind is overpowered. However, it is useless to talk of it! My father's will is as that of the Medes and Persians, and the less said about it the better! So talk to me about Mrs. Hamilton—talk to me about *Ellen*! Why didn't you bring her with you to-day?"

"She has caught a sad cold on the railway—the cold of an opera-singer, in my private conviction. I've a notion, my dear, that the poor girl is particularly tenacious of forms and ceremonies as regards your family, from whom she formerly received a bit of a slight. Unless I'm much mistaken, Ellen will not set foot in Cavendish Square till you've some of ye been to

say, 'How d'ye do' to her, at our Hotel in St. James's-street.'

"That may be very easily managed!" cried Lydia, laughing. "As soon as mamma comes home, we will drive straight to Fenton's. But I hope Mrs. Hamilton is not a formal person? It is my hope that we may see very much of each other; and—"

"Thank ye, thank ye, my dear! She won't be formal with *you*, Lydia. She's prepared to love you with all her might and main. And what's more, she's very fond of your handsome young marquis, my dear, 'Gerald,' as you've the sauciness to call him. She was quite sorry when he left Dean Park! For he often walked over to the Manor, and used to amuse Ellen for hours, rhodomontading about *you*; how much better you talked and walked, rode, drove a pony-chaise, shot at a mark, played billiards, and did all sorts of tomboy things, that would shock Miss Creswell to hear of.—than any other charmer of his acquaintance! Nay, don't look so angry! He didn't accuse you, perhaps, of *quite* all these accomplishments. But he said that one of your great charms consisted in not being missish; in speaking your mind frankly, and enjoying life cordially; not like a wax doll stuffed with bran, after the fashion of half the young ladies or ladyships of his acquaintance."

"And pray is his account of Mrs. Hamilton equally to be relied on?" cried Lydia, much amused. "For he pronounces her the most beautiful woman in England; in proof of which he asserts that Alberic Vernon, of woman-hating renown, has fallen desperately in love with her."

"I hope he'd the grace to tell you, at the same time, that the passion is anything but mutual? He and I used to amuse ourselves for hours watching Master Alberic making the agreeable, and she, snubbing him every moment, as if he cost nothing; while your brother Watty, who has a mighty leaning towards these Vernons, used to look as if he were sitting on hot iron, for fear the young spark should take offence at Ellen's plain speaking."

"I think Walter has rather a partiality for the *Hyde*!" said Lydia, gravely.

"Lord Dartford used to swear he was in love with that pretty die-away damsel of a daughter. So I don't suppose he'll be *particularly* pleased at hearing what has happened since he and the marquis left Dean Park."

"To Miss Vernon?"

"No, to her popinjay of a brother! After all he's perpetually saying against matrimony, the coxcomb actually popped the question to Nelly! To be sure, she didn't give him an opportunity to make quite as great an ass of himself as I could have wished; for she desired *me* to convey to him as decided a negative as one could well express without knocking him down. So I lost all the fun I'd promised myself in a long courtship, which I knew would end with having to bow him out at last."

"What! not tempted by that fine old place? Why, I don't think that *I*, dearly as I love Gerald, could have withstood the Holbein Gallery and golden grove of oaks at the *Hyde*!" cried Lydia. "Seriously, however, dear Colonel Hamilton! what consternation must it have caused in the Vernon family, to hear of their unparalleled son and heir being rejected by a person so unconnected with the peerage?"

"I know only one thing that would have created *greater* consternation, my dear—*i. e.*, her

accepting him! Bless your soul, that man and woman in armour—his father and mother—would have died no other death than seeing Alberic the Great united with a commoner's widow! There would have had to be as fine a funeral at Braxham Church, as I hope there'll be a wedding at Ovington, come next June! By-the-way, my dear, it would have done your heart good to see how proud the worthy doctor was when your letter arrived, apprising him of your marriage, and asking him to perform the ceremony, which was just like one of yours and your mother's kind and pretty thoughts! For, you see, Markham fancied that your father, being up to his ears in dignitaries of the Church, would be wanting a bishop at least, for the grandeur of the thing."

"On the contrary—but for my respect for Dr. Markham—Lord Dartford's tutor, old Mr. Buckingham, would have been the man."

"Well! some of these days, my dear, you must find a good living for Markham, in your lord's list of preferment! He wants it, I suspect, poor fellow! for there's another little olive-branch coming some time this spring! One could almost fancy there was some especial grace in parsonage-houses, to favour their sprouting! I'm to be godfather, I'd have you to know; and I shall be having Lord Dartford next asking me to be bridesman! Poor Jack is everybody's odd man—everybody's dirty dog! But good-by, good-by, my dear! I've promised to be home by three, to beau Ellen to the Panorama of Naples. She's always hankering after Italy—foolish girl!"

"And is not afraid, it seems, of increasing her cold by a visit to Leicester Fields?"

"Ah! Well! I see I've let the cat out of the bag! Never mind! You will know how to make allowances for her, my dear Lydia, and persuade your mother to be prompt in giving us a call."

But there was no farther need of the suggestion. In the course of the day, Colonel Hamilton (who, living in a circle composed of persons mutually interested in each other's affairs, was apt to repeat all that he heard) related to Ellen, after describing the great happiness of Lydia, the uneasiness entertained by her mother on Henry's account. Having at that moment wholly forgotten the Trinity letter and Whitehall encounter, it did not occur to him that his lovely companion was peculiarly interested in knowing that, so far from turning out first man of his year, Henry Hamlyn was likely to prove a failure, so thoroughly was his spirit damped by having been *forced* by his father into a career the most distasteful to his feelings; and Colonel Hamilton having expressed himself with all his usual warmth concerning the disappointment experienced on the occasion by his excellent mother, Ellen instantly made up her mind to volunteer a visit with him to Cavendish Square the following day.

In the interim, however, even this project was forestalled. Mrs. Hamlyn wrote to request that the Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton would accompany her to her box at the Opera, which was a double one; and Ellen, who a few hours before would certainly have declined the invitation, hastened to comply. She felt bound to abstain from all ungracious dealing towards one for whom she had been the innocent cause of so cruel a disappointment.

Harassed as Richard Hamlyn was at this

junction by the unspoken menaces of Spilsby, and his deep regret at having afforded to a person so nearly connected with his noble son-in-law as Lord Crawley the remotest clue to his anxiety to disencumber his banking-house of one of its confidential servants, it would have afforded him some comfort, could he have surmised the degree of mortification unintentionally inflicted that night by his wife upon the obnoxious family of Vernon!

In selecting an opera-box for her, his choice had been solely dictated by his determination that it should be within view of Lady Vernon's; in order that the haughty ladies of the Hyde might learn by ocular demonstration that, however insolently they might rise in Warwickshire above the banker's family, in London, the acquaintanceships of Mrs. Hamlyn were pretty nearly their own; and from the commencement of the season, it was, consequently, worn wood to Lucinda to see the marquis—her marquis—seated by the side of the lovely and elegantly-dressed Lydia, whom a few months before she had treated as an insignificant school-girl; more especially as, whenever Mrs. Hamlyn felt too much out of spirits to attend the opera, Lady Rotherwood officiated as chaperon to the future marchioness, and, within view of the Vernons, treated her future niece with all the affection of a mother, and far more than the consideration she had ever testified towards any inmate of the Hyde! Lord Vernon, resented it, of course, as a new injury on the part of Providence, that the lessee of her Majesty's Theatre should have presumed to let one of the boxes within four of his own, to such people as the family of Hamlyn the banker. But there was no remedy! Either Lucinda and her mother must renounce the enjoyment of the opera, or find all their delight in Grisi and Rubini imbibed by this infamous misappropriation of the Marquis of Dartford, and Box 27!

But on the night in question an aggravation of evil was in store for them. On their way to their box, Lady Vernon had claimed the arm of the Duc de Montmorency, one of the diplomatic *attachés*; a person whom, in the absence of a promising match as the attendant of her daughter, she regarded as an ornament and addition to her box; and, as the duke was too well-bred to take an immediate leave of the lady who honoured him by so pointed a preference, he sat down patiently to be flirted with and smiled upon by Lucinda.

Scarcely, however, had he been five minutes seated, when his double glasses were levelled steadily at the seat usually occupied by the Hamlyns; and, unwilling to provoke the observations certain to be made by a dozen different visitors, every opera-night, touching the great good fortune of Lord Dartford and the striking beauty of his intended bride, Miss Vernon took no notice of the preoccupation of her companion.

But persons of the Duc de Montmorency's nation seldom keep their impressions to themselves. His admiration soon burst forth in exclamations of "*charmante!*" "*divinement belle!*" "*un port de déesse!*" "*une taille de nymphe!*"

"She is very pretty, certainly; and how admirably Persiani is singing to-night," observed Lucinda, in hopes of moderating his enthusiasm.

"Admirably! But who is this lovely neighbour of yours?"

"The daughter of a banker, a person of whom you are likely never to have heard."

"You are speaking of Miss Hamlyn, the beautiful creature the Marquis of Dartford is to marry," said the duke, eagerly. "I have seen her hundreds of times, and been enchanted as often. In my opinion, she is nearly the prettiest, and quite the best-dressed girl in town. But the lady I am admiring is a thousand times more beautiful. *Juste ciel!* If such a woman were to appear at our opera in Paris, not an eye in the house but would be fixed upon her box! *Elle ferait fureur!* But nothing makes a sensation in London! In London, it is scarcely worth while to be a beauty, or a comet, or a cat with six legs. You chilly *insulaires* would scarcely be at the trouble of an interjection, were Cleopatra herself to arrive sailing in her galley on the Thames. And, by-the-way, yonder lovely being gives one rather the idea of Cleopatra!"

Lucinda Vernon, afraid, perhaps, of being classed among her uninterjectional country people, now affected some interest in the subject; and, instead of being satisfied with her own *lorgnon*, borrowed the huge Parisian ivory double barrels of the duke, to examine the new beauty.

"She is, indeed, wonderfully handsome!" was her irrepressible exclamation. "Look, mamma! the most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life."

"A fine woman, certainly," responded Lady Vernon in her turn; "doubtless some vulgar city connexion of the Hamlyns!"

"City connexion, perhaps, but not vulgar," was the duke's remonstrance; and in another minute, as if unable to restrain his curiosity concerning her, he rose, and was about to leave them, when the boxkeeper's key grated in the lock, and Alberic made his appearance.

"I dare say my brother can inform us who she is!" said Miss Vernon, eager to detain him. "He knows the people she is with. Alberic! who is the lady with Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughter to-night?"

Alberic Vernon, who had come straight from his cab to his mother's box from a holy horror of committing himself by promiscuous lounging in the boxes of other ladies, protested that he had not yet had time to look round the house; but, after a fussy adjustment of his glasses, as though for the discovery of a planet, and regardless (in order to satisfy the curiosity of a man so fashionable as Montmorency) of his usual terror of placing himself prominently forward in his family-box, leant over the head of his sister to examine the contents of "the menagerie of Hamlyn the banker."

To have encountered the eyes of a basilisk would not have produced a more electrical effect upon his nerves. Instantly receding into his place, instantly withdrawing his glasses, and losing all colour from his cheeks, and all assurance from his address, he began to stammer forth remarks upon the new ballet. But the duke was not to be thus distanced, and renewed his inquiries. "Who was the lady?"

"A widow," was Alberic's hurried reply; "a woman you have probably never met, and are never likely to meet in society."

And again he fastened upon the ballet; but Montmorency persisted in inquiring the name of the lady he was never destined to meet in society.

"Hamilton!"

"Ha! a very good name—an historical name."

"The English name of all others best known on the Continent," cried Montmorency. "Your Scottish Duke of Hamilton is the representative of one of our French duchies."

"But this person has nothing to do with our Scottish Duke of Hamilton," cried Lady Vernon, vexed beyond her patience. "You are probably unaware that the names of the great Scotch families extend to all the retainers of their clan; and there is no more connexion between these vassals and the head of their house than there would be between your coachman and you, were it the custom of your great French houses to give *their* patronymic to their servants."

"I am quite aware of it!" cried the duke. "But, while contemplating yonder beautiful creature, I am inclined to parody the observation of your famous comedian, and say, 'If God writes a legible hand, that woman is a lady!'"

"She shall be an empress, if you like!" pettishly rejoined Lucinda; "but I can assure you that she is a person we should very reluctantly admit into our society."

Montmorency, too well-bred a man to gain-say the dictum of so fair a lady, uttered some commonplace remark concerning the ballet, by way of changing the conversation, and, un-luckily, addressed his sally to Alberic Vernon, who, with his natural susceptibility of egotism of a Frenchified prig, concluded that his secret was known, and the duke talking at him.

"The lady is cruel, I see!" said Montmorency, adverting to the gorgeous baron in front of the stage, who had just flung himself at the feet of Cerito. "The Herr Baron yonder is too great a barbarian to perceive that it requires something besides his empty grandeur to subdue the heart of a pretty woman. I *hate* a fellow who makes love on the strength of his sixteen quar-terings! So, apparently, does our bellissima ballerina."

Before Mr. Vernon could rouse himself from the shock of what he considered a stroke of persiflage, Montmorency had left the box in search of some friend of Dartford's, who would perhaps put him in the way of a presentation to the beautiful friend of the Hamlyns; and no sooner was he gone, than Lucinda and her mother burst into exclamations of wonder at the want of tact exhibited by foreigners in detecting the characteristics of high and low in English society.

"I should really have thought that a Montmorency—a member of the family of the first baronial family in Christendom—might know better than throw away his admiration on the vulgar widow of a son of that upstart Colonel Hamilton!" said Lady Vernon, swelling with ruffled majesty, and fanning herself with such fervour of indignation, that Alberic entertained little doubt the news of his unhappy passion had already reached his family. His only hope was that—thanks to the ladylike discretion of its charming object—tidings of his rash declaration and immediate rejection might be somewhat longer on the road.

Still, though he would willingly have condemned poor Ellen Hamilton to be thrown into the caldron of boiling oil in which the Jewess of Constance was made to atone for the brightness of her eyes, he thought proper to vindicate his choice by the force of lordly example.

"You were wrong to say that Mrs. Hamilton was a woman you should be sorry to associate

with, Inda!" said he, addressing his sister; "for nothing is more likely than that you will have her next winter at Ormeau, to which place you seem bent upon despatching an olive-branch."

"At Ormeau? Yes! I remember now that the Hamiltons had worked themselves into an acquaintance with the Duke of Elvaston before we left the country!" said Lady Vernon, unable to avoid, without retreating into the back of her box, the vexatious spectacle of the Duc de Montmorency presented in form to Mrs. Hamilton and Lydia Hamlyn by the Marquis of Dartford.

"And since you left the country, they have spent a fortnight there to so much purpose, that Lord Edward Sutton is wild to marry Colonel Hamilton's daughter-in-law, and his family equally eager to promote the match."

"Lord Edward Sutton? What *can* he mean by debasing himself in such a way? Why, he inherits the Wrotesley property, and is in possession of six or seven thousand a year! Lord Edward can afford to marry whom he pleases!"

"The reason, I suppose, that he wishes to marry Mrs. Hamilton."

"I can understand," continued his mother, not heeding his interruption, "that a young man in the situation of Captain Hamlyn, who has no pretension to connexion, and only just enough money to wish for more, might be tempted by Colonel Hamilton's fifteen or twenty thousand a year (what has he?) to make up to his daughter-in-law. A very suitable match on both sides! But for a man of family and fortune like Lord Edward Sutton—it is really disgusting! I should just as soon expect, Alberic, to hear her talked of for *you*!"

This was said wholly without design; for Lady Vernon was precisely the sort of woman whom a gossip must be endued with more courage than usually falls to the lot of that sneaking tribe, to accost with intelligence at the degradation of her son. Barlow of Alderham, the only man aware of what had been going on between the Hyde and Burlington Manor, no more dared advert to the subject in his letters to Grosvenor Place, than lay a sacrilegious finger upon the monuments in Braxham Church! But young Vernon, accustomed to hear the sparring of innuendo systematically carried on between his father and mother (who were apt, like the populace of Rome during the Carnival, to knock each other down with flints formed into the semblance of sugarplums!), had little doubt that he was being flogged over the shoulders of Lord Edward Sutton.

While this uneasy family were studying how to convert even the pleasures of life into pains, and ingrafting hyssop on the rose, the inmates of Mrs. Hamlyn's box were enjoying one of those pleasant evenings which arise for people of well-regulated minds from the elements of amusement around them—agreeable friends, fine music, exquisite dancing, and a succession of fair faces lining the *salle de spectacle* for the recreation of their eyes during the intervals of the performance. The musical taste of Mrs. Hamilton, which was not only of the highest order, but refined by three years' residence and instruction in Italy, enabled her to appreciate the high merits of a company which, after the London fashion, the casual visitors to the box made it a point to decry, and disparage, though certain to revert to it five years afterward, when no longer attainable, as the finest in the

world. Those well-known airs of the 'Lucia' were to her ears familiar and precious as some rich shrine to the eyes of a votary; nor did the plaintive character of the music lose by the companionship of these with whom she found herself in association.

While, in the eyes of Lydia, whose heart was softened by the perfect and unalloyed happiness of her situation between the mother of her veneration and the lover of her choice, this beautiful stranger derived the highest interest from her relationship to their excellent friend the colonel, Ellen could not forbear regarding Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughter in the light of a sister and mother lost to her forever! All she had heard from Henry of the womanly excellences of the former—all she saw in the face of the latter to remind her of the intelligent beauty, the frank cordiality of the object of her affection—imparted new interest in her heart to the kindness with which she was welcomed by both. She felt herself, in short, to be one of the family; and even Colonel Hamilton, though tolerably accustomed now to the effect of her rare beauty, was struck by the exquisite expression imparted by the awakened sensibilities of her heart to one of the finest faces in the world.

While he sat conversing between the acts with Mrs. Hamlyn, the marquis was engaged in eliciting from Ellen instructions for his meditated bridal tour.

"Admit that I am every way the luckiest of the human race, my dearest Mrs. Hamilton!" said he. "In these times, when everybody has seen everything, and half the angelic beings in London are as *blasé* in the pleasures of life as old gentlemen of fifty, to have found a little wife who knows no more of the world than I do myself—who is just as vulgarly delighted as I am with a good opera—and just as enthusiastic in her desire to see something more of valley and mountain in the way of landscape, than old England!—sensible people, like your friends the Cossingtons—or fashionable people, like my friends the Vernons—would, I dare say, despise us as a couple of silly children, whose rawness and newness are something unaccountable. But I assure you that, if there be one thing more than another for which I am obliged to my friend, Mr. Hamlyn, it is for having secured me pretty nearly the only wife with whom I could commence, hand in hand, my experience of the pleasures of life. So you see that, if we are children together, we shall be very happy ones! Indeed, I am beginning to think that we two and Colonel Hamilton are the *only* children left in the world!"

Miss Hamlyn interrupted him to entreat Mrs. Hamilton's indulgence towards his egotism.

"I beg to say that I do *not* apologize!" persisted the young lover, fixing his eyes admiringly on the lovely face that borrowed new charms from the blushes by which it was now overspread. "I look upon Mrs. Hamilton, my dear Lydia, as one of the family; and shall be only too happy to listen when she favours *me*, in return for my selfish confessions, with sisterly confidences of a similar nature."

Though this was said at random, and with reference to Colonel Hamilton's avowed projects in favour of Walter rather than to Henry, with whom at present Lord Dartford had little acquaintance, it sufficed to alarm the womanly dignity of Ellen Hamilton; and her countenance forthwith assumed that quiet gravity

which so well became its chaste but somewhat severe expression.

It was at this pause in the conversation that the door of the box was opened to admit Captain Hamlyn and the Duc de Montmorency, who had applied to Walter to present him to his family; and Dartford, who, with all his dispositions to be brotherly, had not quite forgotten his friend's avowals of contempt for the rusticity and want of refinement of Colonel Hamilton's daughter-in-law, could scarcely repress a smile at the deferential manner in which he was already beginning to address the lady whom he found to be an object of adoration to dukes and the sons of dukes.

It is true that the marquis, prevented by his advantages of birth from appreciating the influence of mere rank upon certain dispositions, attributed the altered manner of Walter Hamlyn to the growing ascendancy of Ellen Hamilton's beauty over his feelings; and took an opportunity to whisper to Lydia, when the others were engaged in conversation, that he suspected his friend Sutton would have to run a neck-and-neck race with his friend Walter for the hand of the "beautiful Ellen."

Too slavishly fashionable, meanwhile, was the captain, to be seen at his mother's opera-box longer than the time necessary for the presentation of his diplomatic friend! Intending to return, towards the close of the ballet, and offer his arm to Mrs. Hamilton through the crush-room to the carriage, while his mother was escorted by the colonel and his sister by her affianced lover, he proceeded on a short visit to the Vernons; justly calculating that the fair Lucinda would scarcely exhibit her usual hauteur towards him, with Dartford and Montmorency engaged before her eyes in the most courteous homage to his family. Nor was he deceived in his hopes of a gracious reception. Miss Vernon and her mother were not popular. Lucinda, being one of those heartless London girls who, while engaged in pursuit of a particular object, are indiscreet enough to disregard all others, and care little whose feelings they wound, found herself, when thrown out in her marquis-chase, alone in her glory—without a single suitor—without a single admirer. She had avowedly pitched her ambitions so high, that men of moderate pretensions were afraid to give way to any dawning feelings of preference.

It was, consequently, a relief when the fashionable Captain Hamlyn presented himself to occupy the place vacated by the recreant duke; affording the certainty of an attendant to call up the carriage. To detain their visitor, with this selfish view, Lucinda accordingly exerted herself to "look and talk delightfully with all her might;" and her smiles and bonmots were as brilliant and fascinating as if they had been ordered, new, bright, and shining, from some jeweller in Pall Mall.

The consequence was, that Walter remained enchanted in his chair during nearly the last act of the ballet; nor was it till a prodigious rustling of satin cloaks and fluttering of swans-down, in an opposite box, apprized him, by the departure of a royal party, that the evening's entertainments were drawing to a close, that he suddenly replaced in their morocco case the huge glasses with which opera-goers are now condemned by the force of fashion to encumber themselves, though they would be voted heavy baggage by a retreating army. Lady Vernon

and her daughter had the mortification to perceive, by the farewell nature of his bow in quitting the box, that they had nothing to hope from his assistance in steering through the crush-room!

But, alas! scarcely had Walter reached the box which bore the name of Mrs. Hamlyn inscribed on the blue label over the door, when he saw, winding along the lobby before him, its departing inmates—Mrs. Hamilton leaning on the arm of Lord Edward Sutton! All he could see of her was the rich Indian shawl which enveloped her fine shoulders, and the diamond comb presented to her that morning by her father-in-law, sparkling among the raven braids that encircled her classically-formed head.

While the family of the banker occupied this prominent and brilliant position in the eyes of the fashionable world, the fountain-head of their pomps and vanities was sorely troubled. Richard Hamlyn had dined that day at the Bankers' Club, enjoying to a degree appreciable only by hollow, worldly natures, the congratulations of his brother bankers on the approaching marriage in his family.

Some few, who had lived in the professional interchange of services with him, shook him heartily by the hand—sincerely rejoicing in an event likely to increase his domestic happiness by that of his daughter. Others—the *eques aurati*, or new-fangled baronets of the order of the Golden Galf, who looked upon financial opulence only as a bridge of ingots, whereby to crawl into the ranks of the aristocracy—expressed, by more deferential salutations, their delight at an alliance enabling the whole bank-erhood of Great Britain. One or two, of genuinely philosophical views, were moderate in their congratulations on a marriage which they regarded, like all other disproportions, as a source of social disorder; while Sir Benjamin Bondwell, and certain of his confraternity, who contemplated with a jealous eye the advancement of the Hamlyns, their pretensions to the notice of royalty and fashionable notoriety, seized upon the occasion for launching against him, under the guise of compliments, a thousand covert sneers on his

showing dolphin-like above
The element he lived in.

All that a very vulgar-minded man could string together in allusion to coronet-coaches stopped in Newgate Market on their way to call in Lombard-street, or to the Goldsmiths' Company walking in peers' robes at the coronation, was levelled at poor Hamlyn; who, like some novice exposed for the first time to the unmerciful roasting of a dinner at the Steaks, had only to smile; take all in good part, and exercise his utmost ingenuity to restore the conversation to its usual channel. It was a relief indeed to his soreness when he found himself overlooked, and his companions engrossed by the consideration of politics, in a light how different from that in which he was forced to view them as a Warwickshire squirrel! Like a certain rich Jew, who, in appreciating a matchless goblet from the hand of Cellini, estimated the metal, per ounce, at melting price—parliamentary eloquence was rated at so much a scruple; wars, and rumours of wars, were talked of according to their influence on the money-market; a massacre was described at its price current; and an inundation deplored according to its fall in consols!

At length, when such of his brethren as were

neither involved in Parliament nor connected with the more attractive clubs of the Carlton quarter, sat down to finish the evening at whist, battling for half-crown points with as much waste of cogitation and earnestness as had enabled them in the course of the morning to nett-thousands by a successful stroke of speculation, Richard Hamlyn hurried away to the House. There had been a time when almost the only social pleasure he really enjoyed consisted in those club-meetings. It was his House of Peers—his *Heralds' College*. There was the name of his forefathers had in remembrance. There still lingered two or three grave, gray-headed men, who had begun life as the bosom-friends of Walter Hamlyn, and still kept among their sacred family relics the mourning-rings they had worn on his decease.

But now, the society of these men was becoming hateful to Him of Dean Park; not because he felt elevated by his new connexions above their level, but because, by his recent policy, he had sunk immeasurably below it. He trembled at the idea that rumours might transpire, not, indeed, of the fearful nature likely to be set afloat by the intermeddling of Spilby, but of the course he had pledged himself to pursue in Parliament on a question of financial policy deeply involving the interests of his moneyed colleagues, his systematic protection of which had for years assigned him immense importance in their eyes.

The discovery *must* come! He knew that, in the course of a few weeks, he should be pointed out among them as having sold them to government for thirty pieces of silver; though the express mintage of those pieces, and alloy of that silver, they were as yet unprepared to point out. But he dreaded the first indications of the coming storm. He shrunk from the exposure of the political baseness into which he had been betrayed by the latent terrors arising from still deeper turpitude. While undergoing the coarse bantering of old Bondwell, he dreaded every moment lest the uncompromising Sir Benjamin should assail him by the name of Judas; for a remote allusion to his filthy bargain with government would have wounded him deeper than the direct accusation of tuft-hunting.

Getting hastily into the carriage, he proceeded to the House of Commons; conscious, however, that even that dignified retreat would shortly become less consolatory to his feelings, and that the conciliations of the Treasury Bench would offer poor compensation for the general respect hitherto commanded by his altitude of parliamentary independence.

Still, the tale of his apostacy was unbruited; and he accordingly brushed past the hump-backed Quasimodo of the house, and ascended the shabbiest and dirtiest staircase in the metropolis, with his usual consciousness of the dignity attached to every component item of the first body-corporate in enlightened Europe. And, by-the-way, Richard Hamlyn having now been twenty years in Parliament, had not only progressed into the dignity of an old member, but, by the changes of the times, come to find himself remarkable for the spruceness, the utmost dandyism of his dress, compared with the less Londonized throng of his compeers of the Reformed House of Commons.

After spending an hour in the House, in a whispered colloquy over the shoulder of Lord Crawley (which, if the truth must be told, bore little reference to the very longwinded and laboured speech with which an honourable oppo-

sition member was favouring his constituents north of the Tweed, through the wearied ears of the Reporter's gallery—one of those dreary parliamentary passages that lead to nothing), the banker finding there was to be no division, returned to Cavendish Square; attributing something of the charm just then to the name of home, which every man of business connects with the leisure he has only enjoyed for five hasty minutes since the hour of an early breakfast.

His family was not yet returned from the opera; and Ramsay, as he hurried before his master into the study to light the lamp, took occasion to mention that "a person had called twice in the course of the evening, requesting to see Mr. Hamlyn."

"Did not the gentleman leave his name?" inquired the banker, who was seldom molested at his private residence by the intrusion of "persons," unless now and then a Barsthorpe constituent, who could not be made to understand that, in London, business hours conclude with the first stroke of the dinner-bell.

"The first time he came, sir, he left no name, but merely said he would call again, as we rather expected you home early," replied Ramsay, proceeding as leisurely with his task of removing and replacing the globe of the Carcel lamp as if the enlightenment of the universe depended upon the evenness of its wick and steadiness of its light! "The second time, sir, as he seemed so very persevering and determined, in making his inquiries of John as to where you had dined, and whether you were likely to be met with at the House to-night, I came to the door myself; and unless I am mistaken, sir, it was one of the banking clerks from Lombard-street."

"A baldheaded man?" inquired Hamlyn, in a low voice, and with assumed unconcern.

"He had his hat on, sir—I really can't take upon me to say. But now I think of it, John told me he had written his name."

"Where is John? Send him hither."

"The footmen are gone with the carriage to fetch my mistress from the opera," replied Ramsay; and as he replaced the carcel on the study-table, its light fell direct upon an open blotting-book, beside the bronze standish, where lay a strip of paper, evidently deposited by John, before he proceeded to his duties of the evening.

It scarcely needed for Mr. Hamlyn to cast his eyes upon the name subscribed in good clerical text, with due regard to the open looping of the Ys and curling of the Ss, to learn that his untimely and unfortunate visitor was no other than—SPILSBY!

But what could be the meaning of this unauthorized intrusion into his private residence? A short time before, and Richard Hamlyn would sooner have expected Birnam Wood to come to Dunsinane, or the Monument on Fish-street Hill to pay a morning visit to the Duke of York's Column, as for any member of his Lombard-street establishment to make his appearance, on business of his own devising, at his private residence; the consecrated groves of Dodona being less sacred in the sight of the priesthood of Apollo, than in theirs, the scaly-barked plane-trees of Cavendish Square.

But, alas! Richard Hamlyn was not unprepared for so singular an infraction of subordination on the part of his head-clerk. The countenance of Spilsby was a book in which he was beginning to read strange things, as distinctly as though its characters were as legibly inscri-

bed as the raised letter-press invented for the use of the blind; and from the day his daughter's marriage was publicly announced, the banker had deciphered in the eyes of his rebellious vizier a determination to turn to account the peculiar situation of his sultan. The higher, in short, the position attained by Hamlyn, the greater the power of the man who was able to precipitate him from his high estate into an abyss of infamy.

From the apex of his present prosperity, having a daughter about to form an alliance with one of the first nobles in the realm—a son distinguished by the general favour of society, and occupying a commission in one of the first regiments—another on the eve of attaining the highest academic honours preparatory to assuming his place in that house of business, to maintain the credit of which his father had attempted such terrible sacrifices—from the eminence of all this, to be precipitated into the dust, would be, indeed, a bitter reverse! The consequence was, that for every step of worldly progress effected by the banker, he fancied he could discern in the menacing looks of his enemy an additional unit augmenting the appraisal of his silence.

For a week past, the clerk had exhibited symptoms of desiring a private interview with his master; and it was with agony of spirit scarcely describable, that Hamlyn had watched him making his exits and entrances; expecting nothing less, every time he made his appearance in the private room, than an explanation, than which death itself would have been more welcome, if death could have ensued without withdrawing the curtain from the disgraceful position of his affairs.

So certain, however, did he now feel of a forthcoming crisis, that, instead of indulging in his usual prayer for a respite—for time—for the delay of a few years—in the hope that the fruition of some of his numerous schemes or a considerable bequest from Colonel Hamilton might enable him to fill up certain deficiencies in his accounts, the consciousness of which "appalled his spirit like a night-shriek," he satisfied himself with marmoring, between his grinding teeth, in the watches of the night—"but a few months! Only let it be delayed a few months—till Lydia's marriage shall have been solemnized, and a shelter be thus provided for the others—and I will submit myself to the worst! That worst would scarce be harder to bear than this accursed persecution!"

CHAPTER XIX.

"Men are but children of a larger growth."

"Bless my soul and body! who would ever have thought of finding *you* here, with the Verestreet clock striking the half hour to twelve as I came past!" cried Colonel Hamilton, addressing Richard Hamlyn, on entering the dining-room in Cavendish Square the following morning, as the family were rising from breakfast. "For don't fancy I came to see *you*! I fancied you safe in the parish of St. Sepulchre, or I wouldn't have set foot in your house!"

"It is not often I am idling at the West End at this hour of the day," replied Hamlyn, with a smile, affecting to humour the cheerful old man's bantering. "But I have an appointment with my lawyers at twelve, and wish to take it in my way to the city."

"Don't let me be any hinderance to you, then. Get into your cab with you, and be off!" cried the colonel, taking the offered seat beside Mrs. Hamlyn, "or we shall be having Messrs. Pounce and Parchment in a pucker, and all along, unless I'm mistaken, of the marriage settlements of a certain Miss Lydia Hamlyn, who sits there, looking as demure and unconcerned as if she had never heard the words jointure or pin-money! As soon as you're gone, I shall expound my business to your good lady; and a flagrant case of gossiping it is, as was ever whispered over a candle-cup. By-the-way, however, my dear Hamlyn, as you've ten minutes on hand over your mark to reach Norfolk-street (for I conclude the clause-spinners who made such a desperate long job of our Burlington lease are still your men?), I may as well tell you some news that reached me this morning from our part of the world. There's a report of a bankruptcy afloat, which has made poor Ovington's hair stand on end."

At the word bankruptcy, Richard Hamlyn, who was gathering together his hat and gloves, winced unconsciously, and made a step back towards the breakfast-table.

"Jacob Durdan, they say, poor fellow, will be in the Gazette in no time. 'Maister,' I suppose, they'll call him? But that's not *our* affair! The thing is, that his farm is actually in the market; and lying, as it does, betwixt Burlington and Dean Park, like the keystone of an arch, I suppose you won't like it to slip through your fingers? Buy it you must—either for yourself or as young Burlington's trustee."

"I am afraid *not*!" replied Hamlyn, much surprised at the intelligence. "Durdan used to value his property at between eleven and twelve thousand pounds; and the *bonâ fide* value cannot be much less than seven."

"Then if the *bonâ fide* value's seven, to you 'tis worth nearer fourteen!" persisted the colonel, "and I shall think you a deuced lucky dog if you get it at ten."

"Perhaps so; but I fear I must be satisfied to do without it. A man in business finds it a hard matter to lay his hands on ten thousand pounds for his private purposes."

"Not when he's got an old friend at his elbow with thirty times ten lying idle, and the grace to be thankful when an opportunity presents itself of making a portion of it useful to better men than himself."

Hamlyn felt every nerve in his frame vibrate at this critical declaration.

"Be assured, my dear sir, that you are as welcome to invest my India bonds, or any other tangible thing of mine, in land, and in your own name, as though John Hamilton were under the turf and Watty Hamlyn standing in his shoes!" persisted the colonel, fancying himself misunderstood.

The hand of the banker became spasmodically clasped in that of his generous friend, as Hamlyn replied,

"I feel all this as it ought to be felt; but Durdan's farm, at the price likely to be put upon it under such circumstances, would be a preposterous purchase!"

"Well! I suppose you 'know best'!" cried the colonel. "I haven't enough of the country gentleman in me yet to know how many years purchase one ought to give for land. Only I concluded this must be a windfall, as Robson writes me word (with a basket of Wilmot's Superb,

that he sent up by the rail this morning, which I can promise you would put all Covent Garden to the blush, and Gunter's shop to the back of it!) that Barlow of Alderham is nibbling already—for Lord Vernon, of course. Barlow is no great capitalist, I take it? But 'twould really be a nice little tit-bit to tack to the skirts of the Braxham property!"

"Certainly—beyond all doubt! And Robson tells you that Barlow has made an offer?"

"So it is supposed. But I remember Robson saying one day, as we were pottering together in the copse adjoining Durdan's, that if ever the property was in the market, you'd be sure to snap it up; and now, he writes word, the people at Ovington look upon it as already gone—so sure are they that you'll overbid Lord Vernon."

"They will prove mistaken," said Hamlyn, gravely. "I should not consider it justifiable to make the purchase."

"Then I think you'll live to repent it when 'tis too late, and you find Lord Vernon growing up like a grain of mustard-seed under your nose, with all the Barlows of Alderham roosting in his branches! Barlow is looking out for a farm to enable that cub of a son of his to prove what deuced bad farmers, what he calls 'a country family,' can produce!"

"However sorely tempted, I feel it my duty to forbear," still persisted the banker.

"What! when the thing takes the form of a profitable investment? Why you know very well how difficult it is, nowadays, to get even four per cent. for money; and if Robson's estimate be correct, Durdan's farm, even at the price named, will bring five! In a month or so, I shall be having one hundred and fifteen thousand pounds thrown upon my hands (if Moonjee and Company are true to their engagements), and then you'll be telling me that, instead of the six per cent. my friends at Chindrapore have hitherto secured me, I might whistle for five! However, don't let me detain you with my Ovington news! Go, and settle Lydia's business for her! Go and lay down the faggots on *your* line of road, and leave Mrs. Hamlyn and me to chat about what concerns us more than dot-and-carry-one!"

A glance which followed the direction of Colonel Hamilton's eyes at that moment exhibited to Richard Hamlyn the face of his wife, as pale as ashes—though inclined over the plate in which she was unconsciously smashing an egg-shell with a gold egg-spoon into the aspect of a choice bit of crackled china; and in his alarm lest her agitation should betray itself injuriously to Colonel Hamilton, after his departure, which was now inevitable, he felt almost inclined to reduce her to the same helpless consistency. For Hamlyn was gradually approaching the pitch of menial irritation which is produced by a concatenation of adverse advents—by constant brooding over evil—by terror—by sleeplessness—by remorse, which, like the desperation of the scorpion surrounded by flaming spirits, instigates frantic ferocity. In humbler life, excited by the coarser struggles of so harassing a situation, he would probably have become guilty of a crime!

But he was a banker—a man of whom calmness, serenity, plausibility, constitute a portion of the stock-in-trade. He was a banker—a man who, so far from being "passion's slave," must be as steadfast in phlegmatic self-possession as demure in demeanour. He accordingly took

from his servant his well-brushed hat and steady-looking beaver gloves; and, after a benignant nod to his family, and smile to Colonel Hamilton (the blandness of which Howard the philanthropist might have envied!), withdrew to his cabriolet—overmastering the strife of mingled fear, shame, hatred, misery, and desperation contending in his tortured breast.

For, alas! there are more Laocoons to be met with unsuspected, among the haunts of daily life, than all the united galleries of Great Britain afford to our inquiring view!

Colonel Hamilton followed him to the door with his eyes, as one loves to dwell upon the aspect of a friend in the fulness of his prosperity and joy; satisfied that if there existed a man on the face of the earth whose virtues had their reward in the attainment of perfect worldly happiness, it was that upright and self-denying individual, Hamlyn the banker!

Even Ramsay, as he waited upon his master to the snow-white steps of his stately doorway, contemplated him with the abject deference paid by the vulgar only to great capitalists, or great lords; and would have denounced as a slanderous libeller the wretch who presumed to spy a spot in such sun of glory, as the church-going, rate-paying, orphan-school-presiding, propagation-of-the-Gospel-subscribing, mild, virtuous, punctual, liberal, Richard Hamlyn, the banker!

Yet this man of universal credit was but a more polished, more cautious, more solid swindler, in the amount of thousands, where swindlers in the amount of tens or hundreds are sentenced to the hulks.

Such was the man who was proceeding into the city, overcome with dread at the idea of an impending interview with his own clerk; and while the sober, lumbering cab of the man of business was starting from the door, Colonel Hamilton proceeded to unfold the purpose of his visit, by placing in the hand of Mrs. Hamlyn a check for one hundred pounds, on her husband's bank.

"You'd do me a mons'ous favour," said he, "by looking me out this trifle's-worth of fallals for a lying-in lady and her bantling, as a present for my good friend, Mrs. Markham, to whose babe I've proposed myself as godfather. I should look like an old ass were I to present myself at one of the Bond-street frilleries, where such matters are ticketed up; and even Ellen (the more's the pity) knows nothing about caudle-cup finery; so I thought it might vex her, poor dear, if I put her upon executing my commission. But as I know you are going about just now, my dear ma'am, among linen and lace shope, in order to give my lady, our young marchioness yonder, a few rags to her back at parting, I thought, maybe, you'd give yourself so much trouble on my account."

"And with the more pleasure," replied Mrs. Hamlyn, "that I have an unfeigned respect and regard for the object of your kindness. No one can better than myself appreciate all that has been effected at Ovington by the influence of her example and vigilance. The late vicar was a widower; and though, during his incumbency, everything was done by Dean Park for the village that we are still doing, or in fact considerably more, the poor people were not half so healthy or happy as now—a sufficient proof that it is the care of the Markhams, and not the money we provide, which ministers to their welfare."

"Nothing can exceed the activity and thoughtfulness of that good woman," added Lydia. "Go where one will, at Ovington, or exercise what charity one may, the vicar's wife has always been beforehand with us—not only with food and alms, but useful advice, far more difficult to bestow. Mrs. Markham is a very model for parsons' wives!"

"Well, my dear, as I said t'other day, you must get Dartford to reward the virtues of the vicarage with a fat living."

"On the contrary," said Miss Hamlyn, hummuring his rallery. "It strikes me that her excellences are more appropriate to a lean one. It would be very unpatriotic in me to remove the second providence of my native Ovington!"

"But being thus disposed towards Mrs. Markham," resumed the banker's wife, "believe me, you would please and prosper her much more by converting your gift into a more solid form. The Markhams are not well off. They have secured, I understand, a small provision for their children. But their family is increasing; and a hundred pounds laid by on compound interest would give your godchild a couple of hundreds to help him on, if a boy, in the outset of life."

"By George! I do believe you've caught the money-itch of Hamlyn!" cried the colonel, almost vexed. "Can't I do something for a godchild, against it wants putting out in life, without denying myself the pleasure of seeing it tidy and smart, in its long clothes and cockade?"

"Just as you please!" replied Mrs. Hamlyn, who loved the colonel too sincerely to be affronted by his occasional pettishness; "but take a woman's word for it that Mrs. Markham has too much sense to care for lace and lawn; and that, if you wish to make this money a source of satisfaction to her, you had better let me purchase some more useful present—plate, linen, furniture, rather than finery, which has little charm for those who have no admiring eyes to be delighted by the exhibition. Even the cap and robe that Lydia embroidered for little Kitty have not, I am sure, been taken out of the wardrobe a dozen times!"

"I'm afraid you're right," cried the colonel; "I wish you'd be sometimes in the wrong, if 'twas only for a change. Well, well! go to Rundell's, and look out a sober parsonage-house-like teapot and coffee-pot, and a cantine of spoons and forks. Will that suit you?"

"It will suit the Markhams, which signifies much more!" said Mrs. Hamlyn, good-humouredly; and while she was yet speaking, there dashed up to the door the well-appointed cab of her son Walter—the equipage of the man of pleasure, forming a singular contrast to that of the man of business, which had just rumbled off in a contrary direction.

"By George! here's Watty himself, in the nick of time!" cried Colonel Hamilton, rising and going to the window. "He shall drive me to the silversmith's at once, and take the trouble off your hands. Lydia, my dear, what will you give me to tell you who the captain's brought with him from the barracks?"

This intimation of Lord Dartford's arrival sufficed to send Miss Hamlyn to the drawing-room to meet their visitor; and as the colonel and Mrs. Hamlyn prepared to follow her lighter footsteps, the veteran could not forbear exclaiming that, next to the pleasure of being eighteen and in love one's self, was that of witnessing so charming a juncture in so charming a person!

"Her happiness is almost too great!" replied her mother, with a sigh. "I sometimes tremble to think what would be the consequence, should any unforeseen event frustrate this hopeful marriage! Her whole heart and soul are embarked in her present prospects."

"But what the deuce *should* happen to prevent it?" cried the colonel. "I hear the old marchioness is as pleased as Punch at the idea of her son's settling! As to him, if Lydia's a wee bit in love, Lord Dartford's a better specimen of a Romeo than I fancied was left upon this lukewarm globe."

"It is true," replied Mrs. Hamlyn. "But one cannot account for one's presentiments; and mine hang all the heavier on my heart that I love this warm-hearted, noble-minded boy as if he were a child of my own. I never could have expected to obtain from a son-in-law the dutiful affection with which Lydia has already inspired Lord Dartford towards her mother. I feel that to number him among my children in my prayers to Heaven, would be an addition to the happiness of my life."

"Will be—say will be—my dear ma'am! There's no *would* in the case," cried Colonel Hamilton. "I hate what nervous folks pretend to call 'presentiments.' What are they but a mistrusting of Providence! Lydia *will* be happy with her husband, and *you* with your son-in-law; and then you'll feel ashamed of having allowed yourself to glance at your bright sunshiny prospects in life, through the medium of a black crape veil! So come along into the drawing-room, and let me hear whether Walter will have anything to say to me. If we should happen to meet some of his smart brother officers, you know, he can say, I'm a quizzical old winkle from the north, from whom he has expectations."

And chuckling at his own joke against himself, the colonel hobbled into the drawing-room, and, much in the same terms, made his proposition to Walter Hamlyn.

"There's no fine folks astir yet, Watty, my boy!" said he. "What if you were to take me as far as Ludgate Hill, to choose some plate? If I haven't the benefit of better taste than my own, they'll be putting me off with some old-fashioned rubbish, and making me pay for the last new kick."

But for his vivid recollection of the "beautiful Ellen," as he had seen her leaning on the arm of Lord Edward Sutton the night before, Walter would, perhaps, have deprecated Lord Dartford's exhortations to take no farther thought of *him*, as he was quite content to remain in Cavendish Square during their expedition into the city. But as his future brother-in-law had previously announced a visit from the marchioness, at two o'clock, which must keep the rest of the party at home to receive her, there was no excuse for non-compliance with the request of Colonel Hamilton.

"And I tell you what you shall do for me, my dear fellow, if you are really going to Rundell's," said Lord Dartford. "Tell them that the paste model they sent me yesterday for the diamond they are resetting, is much too broad for the prettiest little head in England; and that they had better let one of their fellows take an exact measure, with gold wire or something of that kind, before they set to work. I must say," continued he, turning to Miss Hamlyn, "I think Rundell rather gone by, for anything beyond a mere necklace, though they have, unquestiona-

bly, the finest choice of diamonds. But I saw that my mother would be affronted if I took the family jewels anywhere but to the house which has been in charge of them for more than half a century."

"Quite right!" said Lydia. "After all, what does it signify? Diamonds are only valuable as the insignia of a certain rank and fortune; and whether arranged in a manner more or less becoming to the wearer, is of little consequence compared with the chance of vexing Lady Dartford. After wearing them so long, she naturally looks on them as her own; and I should have been far, far better pleased had you left them at her disposal during her lifetime."

"By which I should have deprived her of a great pleasure in seeing you wear them! Whereas, even without having a pretty daughter-in-law as a motive for leaving them off, my mother has never worn the family jewels since the death of her husband. One word more, Walter. Tell the foreman he must apply to the Heralds' Office for the Hamlyn arms he wants to quarter in the new desk—they are making for Dartford Hall; or, if you've one by you, perhaps you'll give him an impression?"

These commissions, so soothing to the vanity of the worldly-minded Walter, reconciled him to the idea of a drive with an old gentleman in a low-crowned hat, who had not the excuse for his originality of costume of being a county member; and having determined to make his way along those dreary Boulevards called the City Road, as a security against an encounter with his fashionable friends, he proceeded, at a slapping pace, through Pentonville and Clerkenwell, towards Gray's Inn Lane; how gloomy a contrast to the brilliant, gorgeous, animated, exciting line of road that divides the capital of France from its gay suburbs!

"That's as fine a young fellow as ever I saw in my life!" cried Colonel Hamilton, after a prolonged meditation upon the excellent temper and warm affections of the young marquiss.

"A perfect gentleman, in every respect," added Walter—giving to the word "gentleman" its most extended and best interpretation.

"Your good mother, with a mother's natural partiality, always adds, 'as perfect as is compatible with a defective education.' She, you know, has been a little Greek-and-Latin bitten, ever since your brother began to carry off the Cambridge prizes! I always observe, by-the-way, that women are twice as proud of the soldiership or scholarship of their sons as the fathers. If *you'd* been one of the heroes of Waterloo, for instance, instead of one of the cheesemongers, poor Madam Hamlyn would have been desperately in love with 'guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbuss, and thunder' for the remainder of her days!"

"Lucky, then, that I have fallen on times more pacific!" said Captain Hamlyn, somewhat nettled, as is usual with the household brigade, at any allusion to his qualities as a carpet knight. "But apropos to Harry, my dear colonel, you, who are in my mother's confidence, which is the next thing to being in my brother's, for they are one and indivisible, whereas with me he is beginning to establish something of an Esau and Jacob jealousy—"

"Are you sure, Watty, that the grudge is not a creation of your own?" interrupted the colonel, turning suddenly towards him.

"Quite sure, as regards my will and feelings!"

I love Harry with all my heart and soul. But, somehow or other, I have always noticed that, between only brothers, an intuitive rivalry is apt to spring up."

"Cain-and-Abelship, I call it—"

"Which so far exists on Harry's part towards myself, that, ever since his return from Italy, he has not been the same brother to me!"

"Why, I thought you'd scarcely met?"

"We meet by letter, every now and then," replied Walter; "but not as we used; and of all the painful things in the world, commend me to a half-confidential letter from one with whom you have been accustomed to communicate openhearted and without reserve!"

"But are you as frank as ever with him? Nothing but confidence ever begets confidence; and if Harry has found out that there's a blue chamber in your own mind, of course he's right to lock the door of his! To tell you my honest belief, Watty, my boy, I'm half afraid there's nothing more difficult than for brothers to maintain total unreserve. Between two friends there are no jarring interests, no mutual delicacies of a pecuniary kind to produce closeness or hesitation. But what were you beginning to say, just now, about confidences likely to have been made me by your mother on Harry's account?"

"Simply that, as she called in your influence to mediate between my brother and father about the partnership in the bank—and successfully, as it appears, on one side—I thought it probable she might have been more explicit with you than myself concerning the origin of Harry's indisposition."

"What the deuce! is he ill, then?" cried the colonel, becoming more interested in a conversation which at first appeared only a little outburst of fraternal spleen on the part of the handsome captain.

"Have you not heard it? No! by-the-way, I remember now, to my shame, that my mother begged me to say nothing to you on the subject."

"Nothing to me? why, surely, this mystery-mania is not becoming epidemic? Well, to be sure! If I find my dear good straightforward Madam Hamlyn beginning to deal in zigzag, I shall feel sure that Truth has sunk much deeper out of sight than the bottom of a well!"

"To exonerate my mother," observed Walter, making so close a shave against the wheel of an omnibus at Battle Bridge, that involuntarily the colonel laid his hand upon the reins, "it is but fair to say that her reserve about Harry's altered state of health and mind arises from a sense of delicacy to others. My brother, it seems, has some strong attachment—"

"The deuce he has!"

"And an unprosperous one. In some way or other—but the *how* is precisely the point concealed from me—his compliance with my father's natural solicitude about the banking-house has been fatal to his hopes as a lover; and my mother declares that, since he gave in, he has been broken-hearted, broken-spirited, incapable of pursuing his studies. Instead of distinguishing himself and taking the high degree expected of him, his tutor has seriously recommended him to withdraw from college for a term, for the recovery of his health."

"God bless my soul! this is bad news indeed!" cried the colonel, sinking back into the corner of the cabriolet to collect his thoughts, with a view of retracing all he was hearing to the concealments practised upon him by his

daughter-in-law concerning her intimacy with Henry Hamlyn, and, after some minutes' cogitation, giving it up as a bad job; so hard a matter was it, to his simple mind, to dive into motives or connect a broken chain of evidence, where his affections were concerned. "And what does your father say to it, all?" resumed he, after a long pause.

"Nothing; for no one dares molest him with the history of his son's qualms of conscience or dilemmas of the heart! My father is so very practical a man, and so unapt to allow his own feelings to interfere with the discharge of his duties, that it requires some courage to ask his indulgence for any frailty of the kind."

"But if this attachment of your brother's be of an objectionable nature—"

"Of course it is," interrupted Walter Hamlyn, warmly, "or he would not have presumed to make a confidante of my mother!"

"That's true, indeed! Then, by George! I'll speak to Hamlyn about it myself!"

"As we know nothing certain on the subject, interference might, perhaps, do more harm than good," observed his companion, afraid of the evil influence which Colonel Hamilton's want of tact might produce over the destinies of poor Henry. "My father would be furious at the idea of a young fellow of his age pretending to form a serious attachment. Why, even I, whose prospects are so much more positive than Henry's—"

"Well, even *you*?" cried the colonel, perceiving him hesitate, as if afraid of having gone too far.

"Even I, my father says, must not venture to think of marrying, unless I can make up my mind to an interested connexion."

"Sell yourself, eh? By George! Ellen is right! The trade of banking incrusts a man's soul with a yellow leprosy. However, I can't fancy that Hamlyn, who professes so warm a friendship for me, would take offence at my suggesting to him that his son wants respite and recreation. It would be a sin that Harry should lose all the ground he has been gaining as one of the first scholars in the land, only that his father might have a little work taken off his hands a few months sooner than he wishes."

"If you succeed in persuading him, you would do us all a genuine kindness," cried Walter. "Harry is a noble fellow, sir! as you said just now of my friend Dartford; and the mere idea of his being over-weighted in study, in order to gratify the vanity of his friends, or satisfy the impatience of my father for his assistance in the banking-house, is a real affliction to me."

"Suppose we push on to Lombard-street, then, after I've settled my business at Rundell's!" said the colonel. "I can make a pretence of wanting money to pay for my purchase, and so have a few minutes chat with your father in his sanctum. He'll fancy I was afraid of alarming your mother by speaking out this morning in Cavendish Square."

"With all my heart!" replied Captain Hamlyn, touching the flank of his fine horse as they emerged from Gray's Inn Lane; and the noble animal evinced some symptoms of displeasure at finding himself arrested in his speed by brewers' drays and other unaristocratic vehicles, strange in shape and alarming in sound to an habitual loungers of the ring. In spite of the hurry and tumult surrounding him, the colonel soon sunk into a reverie, whereof Henry Ham-

dyn and his lovely daughter-in-law supplied the absorbing interest.

Who does not know, or, rather, who *did* not know, the glittering fishes of Ladgate Hill, presiding over the doorway of that temple of pomps and vanities, which, after aiding to bribe thousands of precious souls to perdition—damself, per force of diamond necklaces, and diplomats, per force of diamond snuff-boxes—while making the fortune of half a dozen partners, has disappeared from the face of the commercial earth, leaving its high priests in the House of Commons, to be hereafter translated, perhaps, to the House of Peers!

Into the inner sanctuary of this gorgeous tabernacle did Walter Hamlyn conduct Colonel Hamilton, ensuring him all the deference awaiting the friend of a son of Hamlyn the banker, the future brother-in-law of a marquis, whose family diamonds were resetting in the house.

To customers of such importance, it was of course essential to display a thousand things they did *not* want, in place of the one asked for; and instead of teapots, forks, and spoons, the colonel, accordingly, found himself called upon to admire gilt candelabra on their way to the palace, and pieces of presentation-plate, in the form of vases, groups, shields, salvers; each purporting to be a tribute of respect, by private subscription, to the most virtuous, most able, or most active of the human race. The genuine exclamations of wonder and delight of the worthy nabob were so vociferous as to cause the cheeks of the apathetic man of Crookford's to tingle with shame, as well as to justify the shopmen in farther exhibitions while Captain Hamlyn was engaged in the execution of his brother-in-law's commission; exhibitions ending with the purchase of an opal bracelet for his daughter-in-law, and a diamond fan-mount for the marchioness elect, which Colonel Hamilton was easily persuaded were the most elegant and fashionable trinkets that ever dazzled the eyes of an enlightened public.

"To think what elements of human happiness are lying swamped and hoarded up in yonder Vanity-fair!" ejaculated he, as they took their places again in the cabriolet, after issuing instructions for the engraving of the teapot with the crest they *conceived* must be the Markhams', as figuring on a very extraordinary-looking gig which had been dying a natural death by inches in the open coach-shed of Ovington Vicarage, for the last half dozen years. "Why, if the plate, on sale or in deposit there, were melted down, and the jewels sold at prime cost, one might buy up St. Giles's with the proceeds; and establish on the spot an Irish city of refuge, too clean, airy, light, and decent for people to die in of drunkenness or typhus, or cut each other's throats for pastime!"

"I fear it will not do to refine on such points of moral economy!" replied Walter. "I fancy that, to complete the balance of society, we must have both diamond setters and rookeries."

"To complete the balance of society as at present constituted!" interrupted the colonel. "But things may mend! Your grandchildren may see (for, though I'm to be the last of my race, I suppose you won't) the institution of sumptuary laws; or, maybe, a scientific discovery for the chemical creation of diamonds, neutralizing their value. There may be a philosopher's stone in the crucible yet! The light ages may discover what the dark ones failed to put together; and

'tis my opinion, that if all these metropolitan colleges and universities, conservative or destructive, don't manage to blow-pipe us a new metal or two, in addition to their new gases, they're not worth their brick and mortar!"

"Still, luxury would assume some other shape!" pleaded Walter.

"Luxury itself may become vulgar!" cried the colonel. "The march of enlightenment may make it vulgar. There would be a triumph for the Great Unwashed! Why, after all, Watty, Time is only a great rubbish-hole, which mankind are always labouring to fill up with dust and ashes—broken prejudices and fragments of old abuses—in order to create a solid level for future ages to walk steady upon, eh? But, by George, one musn't be too speculative here, in Lombard-street; or we may chance to get shot out on the pavement, and find a level more solid than agreeable! Shan't you come in with me at the bank?"

"If you give me leave, I will wait for you in the cab. My presence would be a constraint upon your conversation with my father," replied Walter, drawing up before the door of Hamlyn and Co.

A couple of minutes, however, after Colonel Hamilton had disappeared through the oaken swing-doors with their brass network, one of the junior clerks made his appearance (taking his pen from behind his ear, out of respect to his employer's son and heir, as any other man would have touched his hat), begging, in Colonel Hamilton's name, that Captain Hamlyn would please to step out, as he wished to speak with him.

Walter had nothing to do but comply; though he had a particular objection to exhibit his *recherché* style of dress and admirable getting-up to the wonder or sneers of his father's sober house of business; and, on reaching the counting-house, he had the additional vexation to find the concession superfluous.

"Why, Hamlyn's not come to business yet!" said Colonel Hamilton; "and all his clerks seem to think he's been run away with by the old brown horse, who's as likely to have taken a start as Meux's brewhouse! However, I've put the head-clerk (that smooth-tongued fellow with a bald head) out of his pain, by telling him your father is only gone to his lawyer's in Norfolk-street; and, as the consultation must have lasted this hour and a half, he can't be much longer. So we'll even wait for him in his room."

Walter would much rather have retreated to his cab. But he saw that the eyes of all the clerks (except one or two who were engaged in noting the items of an account or numbers of a note, with their finger on the numerals) were fixed admiringly upon him, while Spilsby stood surveying his inches with as close a scrutiny as though he were measuring him for a coat, and, consequently, had not courage to contend against his companion's decision. In a moment they were ushered by Spilsby into the banker's room—cold, neat, sunless, dull—with its eternal half-dozen horse-hair chairs, its faded writing-table, and old-fashioned silver standish.

"And you wonder that I should have disliked the idea of wasting my life in this dreary den?" exclaimed Walter, casting his eyes round the untempting scene of his father's daily labours.

"Indeed I don't! I only wonder that you should presume to wonder at Harry's entertaining the same antipathy."

The expression of his surprise was silenced.

by the re-entrance of Spilsby, who came to bring Colonel Hamilton the three hundred and fifty pounds he had asked for, and request his signature to the receipt. And lo! just as the colonel, after having had the notes told into his hand by the pragmatical clerk, had thrust them somewhat irreverently into his pocket-book, and his pocket-book into his pocket, the door was sharply opened, and Hamlyn made his appearance, with a face nearly as colourless as the paper of the notes! With a single glance, he examined the countenance of the three—his son, his client, and the clerk—who had intruded into his dwelling the preceding night. Having already learned in the counting-house that they awaited him together within, he trembled to surmise the motives which might have united such a heterogeneous assemblage.

That one look sufficed! Walter was disposed to salute with unusual tenderness the father, the disagreeables of whose habits of life were displayed around him in such prominent relief; while as to the colonel, the idea of having money in his pocket which was about to melt out of it in payment for gifts to three of the people he loved best in the world, imparted a double share of benignity to his comely countenance. With respect to the clerk—who could pretend to decipher the ambiguous expression of so mere a mask! At all events, however hostile Spilsby's ulterior intentions, his master saw that, at present, all was safe.

Meanwhile, the mood of the banker was very different from that in which, two hours before, he had made his agitated exit from his house in Cavendish Square. He had been spending the interim in one of the spots where his person was sacred as those of the gods, and his *ipse dixit* as authoritative. The house of Wigwell and Slack fattened upon the litigations and legalizations of that of Hamlyn and Co., as certain insects on the trees from whence they imbibe their pitiful vitality. The constituents of the banker progressed into the clients of the solicitor; the latter being as much the obedient, humble servant of the former, as the oak-apple is flattered resistlessly about by every vibration of the oak on which it is incrustated. Hamlyn was, in short, the sun in whose rays, reflected in the golden sands, the crocodiles' eggs of the law were hatched into existence.

It necessarily followed that though, in support of his unblemished reputation as a great London banker, he maintained in his transactions with them the tone of the rigidly upright man—the punctual, methodical Mr. Hamlyn—he was often obliged to insist upon the prosecution of petty delinquencies; often compelled to borrow the strong arm of the law to crush those wretched vermin, those poor defaulters, called needy men, who, if suffered to prey unmolested, would become fatal in the moneyed world as the legions of rats which in Whittington's time devoured the substance of the King of Barbary. This, though a necessary, was not a flattering occupation; and, after the endless unsavoury conferences which Hamlyn was forced to hold with Messrs. Wigwell and Slack, it was like "music after howling" to listen to the recital of the Dartford rent-roll, in connexion with the marriage settlements of his "right honourable daughter." After the villainous John Doe and Richard Roeisms—the processes of outlawry—the persecutions, prosecutions, and incarcerations—which constitute the killing and wounding of financial

fight, to hear of an estate set apart in the days of King Stephen for the dowry of the "Baronesses of Darteforde" being taxed for the future maintenance of a spinster named Lydia Hamlyn, was a satisfaction indeed!

But this was not all! Scarcely had he crossed the threshold of his house in Lombard-street, when he was accosted with the glad tidings that a Riga house, whereof that of Hamlyn and Co. held bills to the amount of £10,000 (concerning which unsatisfactory rumours had been for a week past prevalent in the city), was not only solvent, but that the report which had created so much consternation in his mind bore reference to another Schreiber and Co., of Afchangel, with whom they had no concern. Had the head-clerk been in the counting-house at the moment of his transit, this gratifying intelligence might have been held suspended over his head. But Spilsby being engaged with Colonel Hamilton, one of the juniors—one of those who loved and was grateful to his master—communicated the glad tidings, breathless with the joy he was about to impart.

The tranquilized banker was accordingly able to listen with exemplary serenity to the representations of Colonel Hamilton; and as it happened to suit his plans that Henry should not commence his duties in the House till after the ensuing Christmas, he had no difficulty in sitting down before them to indite a most paternal epistle to his son, offering him every pecuniary facility towards absenting himself from Cambridge for six months, for the recovery of his health, by perfect leisure or Continental travel.

For this sacrifice, he was more than repaid by the affectionate warmth with which Walter started up to press the hand which had been engaged in conferring a benefit upon his brother; while old Hamilton rubbed his own with glee at the idea of the surprise which Harry's unexpected arrival in town would occasion to Ellen, and the joy which Ellen's surprise might be made to produce for Harry.

"You're made of more penetrable stuff than I took ye for, my dear Hamlyn!" cried he. "But I fancy the best way we can reward you for proving so tractable a soul, is by making ourselves scarce. So give me the letter, and I'll post it as we go home."

"Are you afraid I should repent, and recall it, or that it will not be safe in our letter-box?" demanded the banker, with a smile of arch urbanity.

"Neither one nor t'other! But I'm come to an age when a bird in hand is worth ten in the bush; which is the reason I'm not sorry we're to see the colour of my friends Moonjee and Company's hundred and twenty thousand pounds, before another month goes over our heads! So now, good-by t'ye."

Released from this gratuitous tie upon his time, the banker was preparing to apply himself to the daily business which his unusual absence left at odds, enjoying in every fibre the delicious consciousness of relief from pecuniary pressure, and the golden gleams afforded by the vista opened by Colonel Hamilton's expectations and the Dartford connexion, when the white head of the old gentleman was again thrust in, with "Another word with ye, Hamlyn! Your clerks yonder are sending off a poor fellow, on the plea of your being engaged, whom I've a notion you won't be sorry that I've laid my hands on!"

As he spoke, the colonel again advanced into the room, followed by Walter, and a stout looking man in a round coat with corduroys and leather gaiters, whose costume afforded as singular a contrast to the trimly, well-cut gentility of Captain Hamlyn, as his wholesome, healthy, open countenance presented to the care-withered face of the slave of Mammon.

"Here, Durdan, here!" cried the colonel. "I told ye I thought we could pioneer the way into the presence of the great man!" And to Hamlyn's great annoyance, Colonel Hamilton evinced no intention of allowing the audience to be a private one.

"Servant, Mr. Hamlyn!" said the farmer, unhesitatingly taking the seat hesitatingly offered him by the banker, while the colonel resumed his, and Walter stationed himself on the hearth-rug, with ill-repressed impatience. "The colonel here's been so friendly as to say you'd give me a hearing on a little bit o' business."

"With the greatest pleasure, Durdan!" replied Hamlyn, assuming an air of friendly affability, closely imitated from that with which, in Downing-street, he was usually accosted by Lord Crawley. "Is there anything in which I am able to serve you?"

"I'm obliged to you, sir, nothing! To speak plain, Mr. Hamlyn, I've railed it up from Ovington mainly to be of service to you. You've heard, no doubt, sir, that my matters be a going contrary. But 'tis an ill wind as blows no man good; and I take it you'll be summut the better for Jacob Durdan's downfall."

"I am sorry to hear you apply so decided a word to your affairs," replied the banker, placing his hands with an air of dignified composure on the polished elbows of his arm-chair. "But I trust, Durdan, they may still look up."

"Not they, nor their master neither!" replied the farmer, doggedly.

"I am truly concerned to hear you say so, Durdan! but—"

"No great call, sir, for you to trouble yourself much about the matter!" interrupted the farmer, shrugging his shoulders, with the impatience of a man whom misfortune has rendered mistrustful of fine words. "You and I've been uncomfortable neighbours, Mr. Hamlyn. But that's over now! Shan't trouble nobody at Ovington much longer with my company! So, whether you liked my dealings, or I yours, don't much matter to neither."

"I can assure you, Durdan, that as far as regards that little trespass business—"

"No matter, sir, no matter! You stayed proceedings, at the request o' the good colonel yonder, and there's an end on't! Maybe, if I'd been better up in the world, they'd never begun."

But for the presence of Colonel Hamilton, the banker would probably have put a speedy end to an interview that opened so unsatisfactorily. But the old man kept nodding and winking beseechingly at him, in order to bespeak indulgence towards a poor fellow harassed by adversity out of his good manners.

"The thing's this, Mr. Hamlyn," resumed Durdan, after gulping down an uneasy feeling in his throat: "my farm's in the market; and—"

"You are looking out for a purchaser, eh! Durdan?"

"Contrary, sir; purchasers be a looking out for me. There's Squire Barlow been a haggling with me, like a Jew pedler, ever since the news

of my misfortune (a'ter the burning o' the Liverpool warehouses, with my last consignment o' corn unensured); and I've a letter in my pocket from a Leamington 'orney, with an offer from one Sears, as has realized a mint o' money in the licensed victualling line, and wants to set up for gentleman, and build himself one o' them quality mousetraps they call a villa, on the ruins o' th' old farm!"

Richard Hamlyn majestically shifted the crossing of his legs at the idea of such a Sears, Esquire, established in a Shears Lodge under the very nose of Dean Park!

"Provided you get a long price for your land, Durdan," said Colonel Hamilton, "what's the odds? The colour of one man's money is the same as another's!"

"Why the odds is this, colonel!" replied the farmer, turning with a milder aspect towards the neighbour with whose partridges and pheasants he had been allowed to make acquaintance. "Ours ben't a county o' new-comers, colonel! You've seen the Bear and Ragged Staff monuments in Warick Church, and the Vernon monuments at Brax'am? and you've, maybe, heard Squire Grayke o' Grayke tell of his ancestors being knights o' the shire summas about the time o' County Guy o' Guy's Cliff, or thereabouts. Even Squire Burlow, though forced to take wages as looker to Lord Vernin, have parchments to show for the lordship o' the manor of Ald'r'am, dating from days when papists and Protestants were roasting of one another in Smithfield Market. All this you know better nor I; for never was there a 'sides these county gentlefolks didn't take care to din it in your ears!"

Walter Hamlyn began to testify signs of growing impatience by a vigorous poke of the fire; but his father looking round, quieted him by a glance of reproof.

"Well, sir! if so be these grander folks are proud o' having a deep-struck root in the county (for what roots be stronger than the dead we lay in the soil, from generation to generation?), I've just as great a call to think much o' the Durdians having been 'spectable yeomen on their own land, as my title-deeds will prove, from the time my ancestor joined old Cromwell's at the battle of Edgehill with his family and farming-men. Durdan's Farm, Mr. Hamlyn, has its name in the county as well as Ken'worth or Warick Castle; and if so be I'm forced by the badness o' the times to part with what's as close to me as the blood in my veins, I'd rather make a worse bargain, sir, and be sure th' old farm should stand, and th' old name o' Durdan's hold good, than have a pothouse-keeper's son making a heap o' rubbish o' the roof I was born under, and blotting my father's name out o' the county, as though 't had ought to be 'shamed on!"

"Bravo, Durdan! Well said, my old Trojan!" cried the colonel; "there's more pluck in that speech, man, than in all the gammon ever spouted on the hustings by all the Vernons in the shire! But can't matters be brought about, think ye, to prevent your parting with it at all? A mortgage—now? If a good heavy mortgage—"

"Thank ye, colonel—thank ye heartily and kindly," interrupted Jacob Durdan, in a more subdued voice, now that, having exhaled the spirit of his pride, the reality of his position forced itself anew upon his mind. "Everything's been done as *could* be done to put off the evil day—that is, everything in honesty. No doubt I might

shuffle on, with the chance o' coming to a break at last. But never should I get a wink o' sleep on my pillow, if I thought there was a chance of e'er a man living being the worse for my father's son! Mr. Hamlyn here can understand *that*! Mr. Hamlyn, who knows that the great name borne by Old England in her public dealings is maintained by the same proud feeling in the breasts of millions o' rough, hard-worded fellows, as little thought on as myself by lords and ladies!"

Thus appealed to, the conscience-stricken Richard Hamlyn muttered inarticulately one of those truisms about the unblemished national probity of Great Britain, which he usually reserved for his speeches from the chair at city meetings, or his place in the House of Commons.

"Case is this, col'nel!" resumed Durand, turning short towards the only person present for whom he entertained sufficient respect to care about the impression he was making. "When my old father died, he left his matters at six and sevens. I was a young man, sir, with a family o' still younger brothers and sisters to provide for; so, as in duty bound tow'rd the old man I'd laid in the grave, who'd fit a good fight for us all so long as body and soul held together, I worked hard for 'em all, and lived sparingly. And what's more, I guv up the thoughts o' marrying (as most young fellers o' my age have a mind to) till I'd put 'em all out in life; having first and foremost shackled myself with a knawing worm of a mortgage. For I didn't feel the property my own, so long as e'er a soul living had a right to say that old Jacob Durand as was dead and gone had left a shilling in arrears. Till I paid my father's debts, I lived without salt to my porridge; but my porridge tasted none the worse for *that*, I promise you!"

By this time, the irritation of Richard Hamlyn was excited almost beyond bounds by the schooling of these cruel rebukes, and the more so, that he saw even the levity of his son subdued into respect towards the honest man before him; while Colonel Hamilton kept passing his hand across his shaggy eyebrows in a manner which there was no sunbeam straggling into that dull, dreary apartment, satisfactorily to account for.

"And so, gen'lemen," resumed Durand, "finding that late and early work—saving and sparing—don't suffice to make head again the badness o' the times, sooner than bring matters to the last extremity and disgrace to an honest name, by getting into the Gazette, I've made up my mind to sell—pay every shillin' in the pound—and as to living on a crust, why that I've done already, without grumblin'! And knowin' Squire Hamlyn was once thinkin' o' the farm, and that if we come to a deal he would be for keepin' up th' old homestead, and leavin' it th' old name o' Durand's farm, so that my nephys and nieces may know, fifty years hence, there was *once* a property in the family where their forefathers was born and died on their own belongin's, I've give no answer to Barlow, nor to Shears's 'torney, nor asked nobody to look about for a purchaser, 'fore I inquired if so be it suited *you*, sir, to come down with the money."

Richard Hamlyn budged not so much as an eyelash in reply to this appeal; for, with the incredulity of a grovelling mind towards every nobler sentiment, he doubted not that the rude eloquence of Jacob Durand was a *get-up*, in hopes to raise the price of his farm.

But Colonel Hamilton was more generous. Steering the intermediate course between the se-

verity of a man of business and the tenderness of the man of feeling, he inquired, in plain English, the value set by the farmer upon his property.

"You must tell us exactly what you ask for the old house and land, Durand," said he, "before your proposals can be entertained."

"I know what old Squire Hamlyn offered my father for 'em," rejoined the farmer, "when first as ever he enclosed the Dean lands into a park. But land's worth half as much again nowadays, let alone that the farm's gained a mint in value by that same enclosure. However, I'm no great dab at figures, or maybe I should have made a better job o' my affairs; and the best way o' coming to the pint as to price, gen'lemen, is to show you Squire Barlow's offer, and the letters o' the Leamington 'torney, leaving you to judge what offers you choose to make. On'y not to misguide you with the notion that I want to ris the valu' upon you by the threat of an unpleasant neighbour, I tell you fairly, Mr. Hamlyn, that though at sixes and sevens in my accounts, I'd sooner take a trifle less from *you* than more from either o' 'others, on the consideration as afore mentioned."

"And I can candidly assure *you*, Durand," replied the banker, gravely, "that had it suited me to make the purchase at all, a few hundreds, more or less, would not have been the object to deger or encourage me. But I am sorry to say, the disastrous position of the commercial world compels every man engaged in business to hold his resources at his disposal; and, even if the present depreciated value of agricultural produce were not sufficiently alarming to all landed proprietors, I should—"

"In one word, sir," said Durand, rising from his seat, and buttoning up the coat which the rousing fire stirred up by Captain Hamlyn had compelled him to open in the heat of his explanations—"in one word, you're not disposed to come down? Well, sir, in that case, having done my dooty to all parties, I have only to close with the gen'leman in the 'Delphi, to whom Squire Barlow's referred me as empowered to examine the title-deeds for Lord Vernin. No offence, sir, I hope, for 'trudin' on your time; and I wish you heartily your health, Colonel Ham'ltan, in case I should be out o' the country afore your return to the manor! If I might make bold, and the breed o' white peacocks could be accept'ble, col'nel (which you and the young lady admired so much the day you druv' over to Durand's), I would ask you the favour, col'nel, to let me send 'em over to Burlin'ton in place o' being sold with the stock?"

While Colonel Hamilton was thankfully acknowledging this farewell act of neighbourly courtesy on the part of the unfortunate farmer, the mind of Richard Hamlyn was becoming distracted between the idea of the molestations likely to be practised upon him by Barlow of Alderham, fighting under the flaunting banner of all the Vernons, and his dread lest the prying Spilsbys should be at that moment stationed between the double doors dividing the compting-house from the parlour, obtaining farther insight into his financial dilemmas. He was roused from his abstraction by the voice of Walter.

"Might it not be as well, sir," inquired his son, "to think over these proposals, with reference to the Burlington property, if not to your own? Surely, at all events, among your moneyed friends, it might be possible to find an ad-

vantageous purchaser for Durdan's, more agreeable to your feelings than either this Learning-ton innkeeper, or the agent of Lord Vernon?"

"Mr. Durdan, you see, is pressed to conclude the business," replied his father, much vexed that the explanation of so intimate a portion of his private affairs should have been disentangled in presence of his son and Colonel Hamilton. "I should otherwise have been glad to take the matter into consideration."

"My father would be glad to take the matter into farther consideration, sir," hastily repeated Captain Hamlyn, interrupting the civilities exchanging between Jacob Durdan and his Lord of the Manor. "Would it be inconvenient to you to leave the matter open for a day or two?"

"I couldn't, in course, Cap'n Hamlyn, expect a gentleman to be ready with his 'ay' or 'no' at a pinch, in a matter of so many thousands," replied the farmer. "Inconvenienced I *must* be, any way. But if the colonel here will answer for't to give me Squire Hamlyn's answer, by letter, by Thursday's post, I'll neither meddle nor make with the men o' business in the interim. I know very well that if once a plain man like me gets springed in the noose of their palaver, his neck will be wrung round, or a nail driv through his words, afore he knows where he is; and so, in course, I'd rather deal with gentlefolks whose yea is yea, and nay is nay! What say, colonel? Will you stand my friend so far as act atween me and the squire?"

"With all my heart, Durdan!" cried the good old man. "I'd give a groat you were able to stand the upshot, and keep the farm in your hands; but if not, God forbid I should have my keepers snarling and yelping from month's-end to month's-end like their own terriers, with e'er a Jack in office in the employ of my lord paramount of the Hyde! And now, let's all be off and leave this gentleman to his concerns! You'll find Johnson and his wife at the Hotel in St. James's-street, if you'll look 'in; though, by George, they'd be puzzled to offer you such cheer as you set afore me and Ellen the day we called upon you at the farm. Hamlyn! your servant! This time I promise you that my good-by is as earnest as your own acceptance across a bill. Walter my boy! I'm at your service."

CHAPTER XX.

"I have toil'd, and till'd, and sweaten in the sun
According to the curse: must I do more?
For what should I be gentle? for a war w
With all the elements, ere they will yield
The bread we eat? For what must I be grateful?
For being dust, and grovelling in the dust,
Till I return to dust!"—BYRON.

A WHOLE hour's deliberate consideration of these contending interests and embarrassments did not suffice to restore the banker's mind to composure. He saw clearly that his hesitation to effect a purchase so important to the value of his property as Durdan's farm, was likely to excite the surprise, and, eventually, the misgivings of both Colonel Hamilton and his son; and, difficult as it might be to complete the necessary arrangements, at that moment, he felt that, if within the scope of possibility, the purchase ought to be accomplished.

Richard Hamlyn had now attained one of those exciting crises when a man is driven to attempt measures such as, in cool blood, he

would repudiate as rash and unaccomplishable. Just as a physician will redeem at the last gasp, by some frantic stroke, the life of a patient with which for months he has been tampering—or, rather, just as a sleepwalker will direct his steps towards the broken bridge or crumbling wall, where those in full possession of their faculties must stumble, dizzed, into the abyss—did the banker suddenly make up his mind to an act of desperation.

"That man secured, all might yet be well with me!" was his train of reasoning. "Recruited by these timely succours, and having the certainty of a noble return from my South American speculations, I might yet replace all the missing securities—the Burlington Trust-money—Hamilton's—all my liabilities—if I could secure the silence of Spilsby, and, consequently, time for my affairs to come round. Something must be done! To struggle day after day within the coil of that domestic serpent, I neither can nor will. I feel blasted in mind and body by his pestiferous breath! A death by slow poison—a conscious death—a gradual decay of the flesh and the spirit, were not more loathsome than to be waited upon by his clammy touch, haunted by his stealthy tread, addressed by his mealy voice, watched by his cunning eye. By the God of heaven! my breath seems stifled when I think upon him!"

And in the irritation of his soul, with a sudden jerk he pulled the bell beside his writing-table.

"Send Spilsby hither!" cried he, to the counting-house footman, who answered his summons, with a coalscuttle in his hand.

The head-clerk, who, conscious for some days past of his extended and extending power over his employer, had noticed, with triumph, Mr. Hamlyn's dexterous avoidance of a *tête-à-tête*, could scarcely believe the evidence of his ears, when thus summoned to his presence! Delivering to one of the juniors the bill of exchange he was filling up for the signature of an expectant customer, he turned down the wrist of his coat, and settled his collar, as if proceeding to an audience of some man in power. The altered countenance of Mr. Hamlyn as he entered the counting-house in the morning had not been lost upon him. He felt confident that a decisive blow was to be struck between them. But, unlike his master, Spilsby's feelings were undisturbed by the prospect of the collision. He was as cool—as malignantly cool—as a

"Toad that under the cold stone
Days and nights hath, thirty-one,
Sweltering venom sleeping got!"

and it was with his usual hardened air of self-reliance he entered the parlour of the banker.

In the interim, though but the lapse of a few minutes had occurred, the agitation of Richard Hamlyn—the unusual agitation of that measured and imperturbable man—had attained a pitch which caused his heart to beat as with the strokes of a hammer, and sent all the blood within him throbbing into his head, till his shot eyeballs assumed a terrible appearance.

The moment the baldheaded clerk had closed the door cautiously behind him, Hamlyn advanced with hurried footsteps, bolted it, and put the key into his pocket.

"Sit down, sir!" said he, addressing the astonished clerk, in a hoarse voice—how different in tone from the conciliating blandishment with which for weeks past he had accosted him!

"Sit down, sir!" said he again, in a still more peremptory manner, perceiving Spilsby hesitate, not from respect, but the dread, perhaps, of seeing a knife glitter in the hands, or a pistol concealed under the blotting-book of the desperate man he was confronting. "It is time that you and I understood each other!"

The baldheaded clerk began to mutter something about his earnest hope that no misunderstanding had ever occurred, or was likely to occur, between them.

"None! I shall take care that *none* occur!" said Hamlyn, in the same hoarse, unnatural, concentrated voice. "I *know* that you are my enemy. Your menacing looks pursue me to my calm fireside, molest me in the bosom of my family, frustrate the discharge of my parliamentary duties, and render my life a penalty and a curse! You could not suppose I should long endure this? As I said before, time we understood each other!"

"I should be extremely sorry, Mr. Hamlyn," faltered the clerk, affecting to humour the distracted mood of his employer, "if any inadvertence in my conduct has given rise to impressions of failure of respect."

"You lie, sir!" interrupted the banker. "There has been no inadvertence. Your least movement is calculated—your slightest word instinct with cunning! I see through you, Spilsby—see through you like a pane of ill-favoured, cloudy glass! And you fancy you see through me, in return. But you are mistaken! There are recesses in my mind and conduct which one like you can never penetrate; and into those I am at any moment able to dive, and defy your detection! Do you hear me, Mr. Spilsby?—*to defy your detection!*"

The interpellation seemed almost needful; for the head-clerk had the appearance of being stupefied by the sudden explosion of this unlooked-for storm. It was the first time in the course of their long connexion that he had seen the banker in the slightest degree disturbed; and to behold him thus palpitating and convulsed by struggling passion, was as if the gates of hell had suddenly opened before him.

"I tell you," persisted the banker, coming closer towards him, and lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper, as if it suddenly occurred to him that the conference might be overheard by others as crafty as themselves, "I tell you that, like the fish which, when pursued, has the faculty of discolouring the surrounding waters to baffle its enemies, were you to execute your evil designs towards me, I would so perturb and trouble all which surrounds me, that you, sir, you yourself, should be involved, within an inch of the gallows, in our common ruin! This is no jest, sir, no idle menace! You have no more conception of the extent to which my schemes extend than you have of the nature of your share in the embezzlement which, at this moment, places you in my power!"

At this accusation, every vestige of colour forsook the cheeks and lips of Spilsby. Though an artful, he was by no means a strong-minded man; nor, indeed, have powerful minds ever resorted to the cunning which characterized his habits. He was accordingly overawed by the audacity of Hamlyn's tone, and the ferocity of his denunciations! With the worst opinion of his employer, he believed him capable of having placed the golden cup in the mouth of Benjamin's sack, for the purpose of accusation. By

what effort of legerdemain Hamlyn had replaced the missing securities, justifying such bold defiance, he could not conjecture. But he had little doubt that the same nefarious machinations which had extricated the banker might have transferred supposititious guilt to himself!

"I can assure you, sir," pleaded he, with the humblest deprecation, "that I am neither your enemy nor your defrauder. If I have been so unfortunate as to offend you by declining the consular appointment you were so generous as to procure me, I am willing to prove my zeal by accepting it."

"A well-imagined submission, truly, knowing that it is filled up, and your chance wasted! No, sir! It would no longer suit me to lose your valuable services; that is," continued Hamlyn, with a grim smile, "to lose sight of you! *Here* you must abide, Mr. Spilsby. You told me, the other day, that such was your wish—that you desired no better. Your ambition shall be fulfilled! And now, listen to me—listen to a plain statement which involves the vital interests of your future destinies! You fancy you have a hold over me; that I have committed myself by lapses of discretion—may, why not speak out!—breaches of honesty—of equity—that place me in your power. Suppose this granted! What do you pretend to gain by the denunciation? Will my customers thank you for the announcement of the abstraction of what you have it not in your power to replace? If this house were closed to-morrow, what are you the better for its bankruptcy? You lose your salary, your situation, your respectability. Other houses of business would be cautious of engaging a head clerk out of a house that had disgraced itself; more especially a Judas—a Judas, sir—who has attempted to sell his master. You would be placeless, homeless, friendless; ay! and, in the sequel, perhaps, emulate the tardy repentance of that same Iscariot, *who went and hanged himself!*"

"If I entertained any views or intentions, sir, of the vile nature to which you advert," said Spilsby, in a low, broken tone—for he was thoroughly unmanned—"I should deserve these insinuations. But really—"

"If you do *not*," retorted Hamlyn, "you will have the less hesitation in acceding to the terms I am about to propose to you. Your salary in my establishment amounts, I fancy, to four hundred per annum?"

"To four hundred."

"It is my intention to double it. I have here a paper awaiting your signature. It contains only a few lines, and need cost you little deliberation. You will find yourself required to pledge yourself to secrecy, public and private, with regard to the affairs of the house (which you admit to be fully known to you), on condition of receiving the sum of eight hundred pounds per annum, paid quarterly; and a farther douceur of two hundred guineas, every Christmas, according as you may refrain from annoying and harassing me by petty irritations. If you fancy me likely to compromise our mutual animosity by a large sum in ready money, you are mistaken. I have neither the power nor the will. Make up your mind, therefore, to accept a handsome competence—one thousand a year—at my hands, so long as the house shall keep open; or do your worst—ruin it and me, if you can—and abide the consequences which I swear to you are at this moment impending over your head!"

The clerk almost gasped for breath. There was something in the desperation of Hamlyn that seemed to cleave him to the earth! His tongue grew dry within his mouth, till he was almost incapable of utterance. To have called for help, overmastered the incensed man before him, and exposed to the arbitration of the law the antagonism between them, would only accelerate the catastrophe of which he stood in awe. Spilsby felt convinced that, at his first movement, the frantic banker would rush upon him and lay him dead at his feet!

On the other hand, the terms of pacification offered him, exceeded his hopes. Without foreseeing exactly to what degree he might implicate himself in a felony by his avowal of participation in the previous acts of Hamlyn and Co., the prospect of an income of a thousand a year was *El Dorado* to the clerk. Pentonville and lodgings disappeared before him. He saw himself grown "respectable"—a householder—living cleanly and "keeping a gig," bringing up his sons to the learned professions, and his daughters at a genteel boarding-school!

Richard Hamlyn saw plainly the advantage he had gained. Already his heel was upon the head of the serpent!

"Your stipend is due on the first of next month, I think?" said the banker. "The first quarterly instalment lies before you," said he, placing two hundred-pound notes beside the paper he had hastily drawn up, "the receipt of which you will have, the goodness to acknowledge on the same sheet. Make up your mind, Mr. Spilsby! I have no time to throw away upon its vacillations."

The baldheaded clerk cast a hurried, haggard glance around the chamber, as if expecting its dingy walls to emit counsellors for his dilemma. Bewildered as he was, he would have given half the amount before him for an hour's leisure for the arrangement of his ideas. But this delay squared not with the policy of his master. Five minutes afterward, the notes were in Spilsby's pocket; the paper, duly signed, was deposited in the desk of the banker, and a mountain removed from the breast of Richard Hamlyn!

"And now, Spilsby," said he, with difficulty restraining his desire to cry aloud for joy in the fulness of his heart, when, released from its agonizing tension, the blood gradually returned to its usual channels, "we perfectly understand each other. If not friends, we are at least confederates for life—confederates whose well-being is bound up in mutual conciliation. I shall receive you with all the consideration due to your confidential position in my establishment, with more than you ever received at my hands. Be all trace of this interview banished between us! Nothing on my part shall ever recall a disagreeable impression to your mind. From *you* I expect similar forbearance."

"I trust, sir, I shall never lose sight of the deference becoming my helpless dependance upon you!" replied Spilsby, gradually recovering the power of thinking, feeling, and speaking for himself. "I would fain thin this explanation had never taken place. But I have had no choice in the matter. All I can now desire is that it may be obliterated from your remembrance, as I shall strive to efface it from mine."

Thus ended this fearful struggle for life and death; and no one who saw Richard Hamlyn that afternoon, sedate and courteous, upon Change, receiving the congratulations of his in-

timates on the good news from Riga; and exchanging with the mere men of business with whom he was in connexion the usual forms and negotiations of the day—while stockbrokers respectfully uncapped as he glanced their way, and many a grayheaded man of double his years stood aside with reverence for the passage of the righteous-overmuch promoter of half the charitable institutions of the metropolis—would have assigned the smallest credit to the asseverations of the baldheaded clerk, had he sworn on the Gospels, in presence of the assembled magistrature of the city, to the truth of the scene described in the foregoing pages!

But life is full of contradictions. Could we behold the individuals with whom we live in habits of social intercourse, in the closer relations of life and at all hours of the day, how few of us but would start back with surprise, in many instances with horror, on recognising our utter ignorance of their real natures and pursuits! Nor is this altogether the result of human hypocrisy; human folly has a considerable share in the illusion. We see people through the medium of our prejudices as often as through that of their pretensions; endowing them with imaginary virtues for our worship, or supposititious vices for our abhorrence; and, when abused in our gratuitous error, visit upon them the flights of our imaginations. Yet the lover who chooses to elevate the lady of his thoughts into a divinity has no right to resent her proving herself a mere mortal; nor the public to create unto itself idols, for the mere purpose of knocking them into dust in the sequel, as mere puppets of wood or images of clay.

It was scarcely the fault of the honourable member for Barsthorpe, if the London world, after admiring for twenty years the excellence of his establishment, the perfection of his equipages, the activity of his parliamentary career, the liberality of his private—knowing him to be neither a libertine, a gambler, a sot, nor a spend-thrift (the frailties most common in connexion with capital dinners and a knowing turnout)—should choose to elevate him into the most virtuous of mankind—one who might have been Bishop Heber the Apostle, had he not been Hamlyn the banker!

The dinner-party which took place that very day in Cavendish Square was citable for its elegance and pleasantness, even among the many brilliant banquets succeeding each other at what the newspapers chose to term "the hospitable family mansion of Mr. Hamlyn." The party was not large. The Marchioness of Dartford, an habitual invalid, disliking noise and strangers, was charmed with the gentle serenity of Mrs. Hamlyn, and the ladylike propriety of her new daughter-in-law, of whom, by-the-way, Lady Rotherwood did the honours to her sister as though she were showing off a child of her own. Colonel Hamilton and Ellen, with Lord Crawley and Walter, completed the party; and Lord Vernon might have judged it a sufficient reason for dismissing his French cook, and renouncing forced fruit and vegetables for the remainder of the season, could he have witnessed the perfection of gastronomy demonstrating the vulgarity of an enjoyment thus emulated by an upstart like the money-broker of Dean Park.

Colonel Hamilton whispered to himself more than once in the course of the entertainment, that even Ormeau could not pretend to rivalry with the banker in the art of dinner-giving; and

on such an occasion as the present, where the parties so well understood each other and were so perfectly happy, there was not room for the only deterioration ever perceptible at his table, namely, a certain formality arising from want of harmony and assortment among the guests. Lord Crawley, who had not seen his sister since her dangerous illness, seemed to take particular delight in a reunion occurring under circumstances so auspicious. The home secretary, always sociable, was unusually anecdotic and agreeable; either in compliment to the happy position of his nephew, as an object of disinterested affection in the bosom of such a family; or to the bright eyes of Mrs. Hamilton, whom he beheld for the first time, and hailed with enthusiasm as an animated muse, a model of all that was fair and noble, even before he discovered her to be the nominal heiress of the rich old nabob, who had given him so valuable a lesson in Indian policy, seasoned with elephantisms, at Dean Park.

"I believe you mean to provide wives for our whole family, my dear Mrs. Hamlyn!" whispered Lady Rotherwood to the banker's wife; while Lydia took her seat after dinner beside the *chaiselongue* on which her kind and admiring mother-in-law extended herself for a short repose previous to coffee. "Not content with finding the dearest little marchioness for my nephew that his wildest desires could have fancied, you have placed in my brother's way the only woman I ever saw likely to distract his attention from the interests of public life. I never knew Crawley smitten before!"

Mrs. Hamlyn smiled, and of course disclaimed, as she glanced towards Ellen, who, in order to allow more freedom of speech to the family party, had retreated into the little boudoir full of engravings, wherein that fatal compact had been made between the home secretary and the master of the house, the fearful consequences whereof were still concealed among the mysteries hidden in the lap of time. But the smile was a hollow one. Mrs. Hamlyn heard with the natural jealousy of a mother any allusion to a new conquest effected by the object of Henry's adoration; and though vexed, almost indignant, at noticing the profound attention paid by her eldest son throughout dinner to Mrs. Hamilton, beside whom he was seated, she felt doubly distressed at the idea of a preference on the part of Lord Crawley, so alarming to the hopes and happiness of her favourite child.

A new scene of triumph, meanwhile, was commencing for Lydia. The Marchioness of Dartford, an accomplished musician, and passionately devoted to the art, but debarred by the state of her health from attending operas and concerts, and, consequently, a stranger to the *chef d'œuvres* of modern harmony, was overwhelmed with delight at the masterly performance of her daughter-in-law. The duets from the "Lucia" and "Norma," executed by Lydia and Ellen with a degree of perfection rarely attained by non-professional singers, drew tears from her eyes; and before the close of "Deh! con te," Lord Crawley and Walter were standing with Dartford behind the piano, in ecstasies, real or pretended, almost as great as those of the genuine amateur, a circumstance laughingly pointed out by Colonel Hamilton to his friend the banker, as they entered the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room together.

Was it likely that a man thus situated—thus

gloating in the enjoyment of every social pleasure, every social distinction—should have leisure to reflect on the morrow with due solicitude upon his responsibilities towards his hundreds of clients?—to ponder upon the interests of such people as the vicar's family, the children of a physician in Russell Square, the widow Darley in Lemon-tree Yard, or Sir Robert Maitland in the Hebrides; the annuity of Miss Creswell, the governess, or the compound interest of the Ovington Savings' Bank? Astonishing, indeed, had he so much as deigned to recognise the existence of such nonentities, while entertaining with *their* means, and by the wasting of *their* substance, the future relatives and present friends of the marchioness, his right honourable daughter!

"Has your ladyship heard that Hamlyn, the banker, is likely to be created Lord Scrip in the next batch of peers?" inquired Flimflam of Lady Vernon, beside whom he had manoeuvred himself into a seat at dinner that day, at a dinner-party at the house of one of her Northumberland neighbours, in hopes of worming himself into her good graces hereafter, as a profitable dinner-giver and fashionable lady patroness.

"A joke, of course!" replied Lady Vernon, who, knowing Mr. Flimflam to be a person engaged to supply the small talk of dinner-parties, as Gunter is engaged to furnish bonbons for the dessert, conceived that such a man could not ask for bread without a latent pun.

"A jest exceedingly likely to prove earnest! It is amazing how those Hamlyns are getting on, and, we may add, their sons and daughters getting off! That pretty simple-looking daughter has entrapped the best match of the season; and the son is going to be married to a widow with twenty thousand a year, a woman who has lately refused some nobleman's son (I don't know whom, but a capital match), out of affection for the bright eyes of that silly young coxcomb, Captain Hamlyn of the Blues."

Lady Vernon winced. Her withers were grievously wrung. That very morning she had heard the first whisper of Alberic's humiliating rejection by Mrs. Hamilton, and had long begun to look upon Walter as a very passable *pis-aller* for Lucinda, in case the present season should prove as infructuous as the last. The heir of Dean Park was a bagged fox, whom it did them no harm to secure, in case better game were wanting.

"I must say," resumed Flimflam (a professional man of infinitesimal calibre), "that nothing appears to me more absurd than the position assumed in society by bankers, above any other species of mercantile men. Dealers in silver and gold are not a bit the less dealers because the queen's countenance is stamped upon their merchandise; and why we should see such people as the Hamlyns honoured by royal visits and invitations more than other commercial people—"

"Royal notice is often bestowed for specific purposes!" interrupted Lady Vernon, almost overlooking the audacity of the little insect who buzzed so familiarly in her ears, in consideration of the judgment with which his sarcasms were directed. "But I can assure you that, in the county in which Mr. Hamlyn's father chose to establish himself and purchase an estate, they are still looked upon in their true light of *parvenus*. Lord Vernon (their nearest neighbour) considers them highly respectable people, who do much good in their way; but Mr. and Mrs. Hamlyn stand in a very different light in their

country neighbourhood and among the London crowd, which has less time to take accurate measure of claims and pretensions."

"Oh! as to London," retorted Flimflam, "as your ladyship justly observes, in the present disordered state of the social system, people go where they are amused, without asking by whom or caring how. If Madame Laffarge were to open a fine house in Grosvenor Square, with the best music and best suppers of the season, she would be visited by everybody. At the end of a year or two, if her music and suppers became less good, they would begin to inquire *who* she was, and pretend that they had never heard of her name till she was forced upon their acquaintance by their friend Lady So and So. It is not every one who preserves, on such points, the rigid sense of dignity exercised in so exemplary a manner by your ladyship."

"What possible object could I have," gravely resumed Lady Vernon, "in cultivating the acquaintance of such people as the Hamlyns? They have everything to gain from me—I have nothing to gain from them."

"Why, as your ladyship justly observes," replied Flimflam, "the show and ostentation of such an establishment as theirs (devised, no doubt, as an advertisement in large capitals of the solidity of the firm) may be highly attractive to the vulgar, but is the very thing to disgust persons of genuine refinement! I have dined occasionally at Hamlyn's (with whom I have parliamentary business that necessitates a sort of acquaintance), and confess nothing strikes me more than the contrast afforded by his flashy table to those of certain old, and, if I may presume to say so, old-fashioned nobility, with whom I have the honour of dining, such as the Duke of Saxmundham, the Marquis of Oxgraze, the Earl of Titheprig."

"The Duke of Saxmundham is an uncle of mine, Lord Titheprig is my brother-in-law!" observed Lady Vernon, fancying she was communicating news to Flimflam, who bowed in grateful acknowledgment, till his *loupet* touched the table-cloth.

"At Hamlyn's," resumed he, "one is absolutely dazzled by excess of light and the newness of the plate, as if the host cared only to prove the amount of his credit with his jeweller and wax-chandler! The comfort of his guests is never thought of. Shaded lights, that would fail to exhibit the lustre of his silver wine-cistern, such a man as Hamlyn would not hear of!"

"For my part, I detest that sort of over-polished, over-frosted fancy plate, which looks as if it had just been figuring in Storr and Mortimer's window!" sneered Lady Vernon. "It is like publishing by sound of trumpet that you are a man of yesterday, to exhibit such *very* new-fangled devices."

"Then, the dinner itself," resumed Flimflam (whose rancour was excited against Hamlyn by having had it repeated to him by his bosom enemy, the learned Theban of the Temple, that the banker had denounced him to Lord Crawley, on issuing from his last dinner-party, as "a failure—not so good as usual!"), "the dinner itself is in what I consider the worst taste! Everything garnished—everything *à la* some preposterous thing or other! Such gilding of refined gold, and painting the lily! *Turbot à la Tartare*, and *faisan à l'estragon*!—as if the simple flavour of the best things in the world were not sufficient to bribe the *beau monde* to dine with a banker!"

"I suppose *some* persons are tempted there in search of novelty," replied Lady Vernon, contemptuously. "People, tired of their plain roast venison at home, find amusement in exploring the eminent cooks of London—no matter with whom they may be living."

"And certainly, at Hamlyn's, one is sure of novelty!" observed Flimflam. "I recollect his giving us canvas-back ducks one winter, which he receives regularly from his correspondents at New-York."

"I suppose, then, there is a game-bag attached to his letter-bag?" observed Lady Vernon, with a sneer.

"And, as your ladyship is probably aware, he cultivates, in his succession-houses at Dean Park, a variety of tropical fruits, which are grown nowhere else in England: about as good eating as the waxen fruit of an epergne, with a little powdered sugar sifted over it."

"Very good things to exhibit at a horticultural show, in order that his own and his garden-er's name may figure in the morning papers!" observed Lady Vernon. "But I own I am humble enough to be contented with a good Providence pine!"

"Even the pines at Hamlyn's," resumed Flimflam, "are served as I never saw them in any other house. The pine-stands are of gold, with long, burnished, pendent leaves, in the form of the natural fruit."

"Disgusting!" exclaimed Lady Vernon. "Nothing more offensive than contact between fruit and plate, which can only be cleared by substances fatal to the flavour. Fruit should be served exclusively on glass or china—"

"Not by a banker!" retorted Flimflam, with a venomous smile. "Gold (often, I am afraid, *gilding*) is the emblem of his calling—the outward and visible sign of his inward *disgrace*. For, after all, as your ladyship justly observes, what can be more suspicious of a great banker? By what means can it have been amassed, but able speculation with the fortunes of others; by the risk of what is not his own, and what, if lost, he is unable to replace? For what purpose do we intrust our property to a banker? To be taken care of, and rendered back on demand! If susceptible of being turned to account, the profit should be ours, or partly ours; otherwise, we incur the hazard without benefit in the gain. Courts began life, we are told, with half a crown. How did he obtain his millions? By gaining the confidence of rich men, and the credit of a man possessing the confidence of rich men, till he held in his hands, in deposit, the means of indulging his genius for financial speculation. It was genius, and it prospered! But a blunder of Courts's might have involved hundreds of families in ruin; whereas his prosperity enabled him to prove, by the alliances of his family, that the proudest colossal fortune (even if a *solid* colossal fortune, and not a mere colossal credit), that the most moral houses of the realm, will grovel in the dust at the foot of the altar of the golden calf!"

"Most true, indeed!" ejaculated Lady Vernon, beginning to discover eloquence in the rhapsodies of a man whose principles were so congenial with her own, and not stooping to reflect that the principles of a dining-outman are plastic to the prejudices of every house in which he is accustomed to pick up crumbs of cake and slices of venison.

"The fact is," resumed Flimflam, perceiving

that he was making an impression, "there are too many of these gilt counterfeits in society! Far too much glare, and bustle, and show has been introduced into the quiet resorts of the great world by indulgent toleration of these Brummagen pretenders. Like the vulgar *cornets à pistons* and Turkish cymbals, which have produced such deterioration in modern music, these people make too much noise. If I were to date the decline of taste in England in all matters of art or literature, it would be from the ascendancy of the moneyed interests. A financial aristocracy, a nobility of the counter, encourages artists, but extinguishes art. Mozart has been out of fashion ever since seven bankers' wives had boxes in the grand-tier; and it is well known that Lawrence attributed the gimcrackery of his latter portraits to the evil influence of city patronage."

"It is certain," observed Lady Vernon, "that the Vandikes and Lelys, whose practice was confined exclusively to the court, produced a very different order of portrait from the Shees and Chalons, compelled to perpetuate the necklaces and guipare lace of Portland Place and Harley-street."

"Even as regards literature," added Flimflam, "just as all the unctuous dishes of the French *cuisine*, over-truffed and over-spiced, were invented for the *Premiers Généraux* of the time of Louis XV., those dreadful, flimsy, flashy, unwholesome tissues of false sentiment and flippancy, called fashionable novels, were composed for the delight of the bankers' wives. A *ragot à la financière*, as I need not remind your ladyship, is a fricassee of coxcombs! The favourite works on the boudoir-table of the Hamlyn tribe are those gaudy fool-traps, the fashionable annuals."

"Too true!" replied Lady Vernon, beginning to wonder why she had always conceived such a dislike towards little Mr. Flimflam. "But, after all, may there not be micheing malicho in all this? Are not these bankers interested in promoting a taste for every idle and useless expense which increases the value of money?"

"A most luminous idea—a most logical conclusion!" said Flimflam, gravely. "Many a political economist might envy the origination of such a theory, and Montesquieu has gained credit by axioms less profound. But are we not sometimes over-apt to impute designs to our neighbours? The policy of Russia, for instance. Which of us has not heard, as long as he can remember, of the designs of Russia? Whereas, as Lord Crawley observed to me when I was dining with him t'other day (and Lord Crawley may be esteemed something of an authority on such points!), if Russia had any marvellous designs, would she be fool enough to let us find her out?"

"What is that, my dear Flimflam?" inquired a distinguished opposition member seated near them, whose ear was caught by such mighty names as those of an empire and a home secretary.

"I was telling Lady Vernon," said Flimflam—enchanted to extend the circle of his auditors—"that the other day Lord Crawley was observing to me on the absurdity of attributing profound or crooked policy to the Russians, the most barbarously arbitrary of all European cabinets; a cabinet which belabours one *au moral* as it crushed Napoleon *au physique*, by the frozen hammer

of Thor rather than by the polished steel of *Ma-chiavelism*!"

"Rather a singular audacity of expression for Crawley!" observed the gentleman he was addressing, with an air of polite incredulity.

"I can, however, attest its authenticity, for he said it to myself!" replied Flimflam stoutly; thereby entitling the persons present to attribute in all companies to the Home Secretary a speech and sentiment in which his real share was in the proportion of one pennyworth of bread to a monstrous quantity of sack.

But, saving for such exaggerations and amplifications as this, and such rumours as that of the scrip peerage, what would become of the profitable occupation of the Pique Assiette, or diner-out! a moral *gargotier*, who lives by hashing up with spices and condiments, for the small-talk of his Saturday's dinner, the savoury morsels he has filched and carried away from the colloquial feasts of the preceding days of the week!

Verily, Flimflam had his reward! He was requested by Lady Vernon, in the course of the evening, to do her the favour of calling upon her in Grosvenor Place; and before four-and-twenty hours were over his head, had amused the dinner-table of a fox-hunting country baronet with an account of the absurdity of a certain ultra-fashionable Lady Vernon, who assured him—*him*, Erasmus Flimflam—that she had been forced to desert her old box at the opera, and ascend a tier higher, in consequence of the glare of the bullion and spangles displayed in the turbans and trimmings of the bankers' wives!

The following Sunday, the "familiar toad" assumed his place for the first time at the table of Lord Vernon, furnished with some capital impromptu anecdotes of Sheridan, Curran, and Horne Tooke, well adapted for the Whig atmosphere of the house; and the sowing of the dragon's teeth by Cadmus was not more fertile in the production of strife and warfare, than the tale-bearing and tittle-tattle of the habitual diner-out, as exercised that day in Grosvenor Place!

CHAPTER XXI.

"Sunshine and storm—th' alternate checker-work
Of human fortune!"—SHELLEY.

It was scarcely possible for a life of only four-and-twenty years' duration to present a succession of stronger contrasts than that of Mrs. Hamilton. The circumscribed horizon of her penury-stricken youth had been cheered by the affection of a mother in whose heart she reigned supreme; and when the epoch of first love, the brightest of woman's life, was darkened and depressed by the persecutions so wantonly inflicted by the banker, the faithful devotion of Robert Hamilton had proved a haven in the storm, an anchor of safety and salvation.

She was, consequently, fully justified in the faith, which most women, whether justifiedly or not, profess in their heart of hearts, that love is the surest of human consolations; and when trouble came again, and she found herself alone in the world, alone and exposed to the molestations which beset a woman so singularly beautiful, it was but natural she should accept with gratitude the homage of such an attachment as Henry Hamlyn's, as her best chance of restoration to worldly happiness.

But she deceived herself. Her future career was not to be as they had planned it together in that happy land, where love is prematurely ripened by the influence of language, climate, habits, manners—where every breath is a sigh and every word an endearment. They had agreed to enjoy together a life of study and seclusion, of modest competence, and mutual devotion. Instead of which, it was now decreed that they were to meet no more in this world; and Ellen, instead of becoming an obscure, laborious, adored and adoring wife, found herself suddenly elevated to the enjoyment of every earthly luxury, and the gratification of every earthly vanity and whim. Followed and flattered by those who were enabled to place her in the highest rank of English society, adored by the fond generosity of the colonel with jewels and costly attire, she now possessed everything the heart of woman could desire, except the one thing needful, the object of her sole affection.

While the fashionable world was as usual taking fire with enthusiasm under the influence of a new beauty—while she was welcomed into such circles as those of Ormeau and Rotherwood House, with the utmost deference and adulation—her heart was wrung with a sense of its loneliness! The passion of a silly fop like Alberic Vernon was only a source of disgust; the affection of an amiable man like Lord Edward Sutton, a matter of regret. For her whole soul was still concentrated in that silent, dreary chamber of the solitary student, who, if he had tacitly withdrawn the pledge of their trothlight, was not the less dear to every fibre of her heart.

To whatever place of public amusement poor Ellen was forced by the mistaken kindness of the good colonel, her thoughts were constantly wandering to the past, constantly distracted by surmises concerning the health and happiness of him whom, for a time, she had regarded as her husband. Though no longer able to attach a sentiment of personal pride to his college triumphs, she felt deeply mortified on learning from her father-in-law, the sudden decline of his expectations, and from the moment tidings reached her of his indisposition, scarcely absented herself an hour from the company of Mrs. Hamlyn, so eager was she to obtain intelligence of the invalid.

Between these two women, united by a common object of boundless affection, not a syllable of explanation had been exchanged. Situated as they mutually were, it was impossible for one to say to the other, "Dear indeed would you have been to me as the wife of my son!" or for the other to whisper, "Fain would I have been to you as the fondest and most dutiful of daughters." But without a word spoken, they understood each other—appreciated each other—loved each other. When Ellen entered the drawing-room in Cavendish Square, with anxious looks, Mrs. Hamlyn took occasion to inform some other person present that she had heard from Henry—that Henry was better; and if Mrs. Hamlyn appeared too much out of spirits to attend some brilliant ball or gay party, Ellen would persuade Lydia to content herself with the *chaperonage* of Lady Rotherwood, and pretend a headache, in her turn, as an excuse for remaining at home with Mrs. Hamlyn.

Over their quiet work and tea-table, they never mentioned the name of Henry. Yet every syllable uttered between them bore indistinct reference to him or to his projects; and, in reverting

to the past, though the affectionate mother spoke only of Walter and her daughter, not a trait suggested of them—not a nursery anecdote she recalled, but it was easy to discover the part which Henry had borne in the affair. It seemed almost as if, conscious of the distance which Lydia's happy marriage must create between her and her parents, Mrs. Hamlyn were securing to herself future consolation in the affections of a new daughter.

Colonel Hamilton saw all this, and saw it with the utmost satisfaction. The banker's wife was his model of womanly excellence; and he rejoiced that the Ellen in whom he was desirous of investing his whole stock of human affections, should modify the somewhat lofty tone of her character after the submissive gentleness of Mrs. Hamlyn. He fancied that the energetic disposition of his daughter-in-law might inspire her friend with courage for her approaching separation from the young marchioness; and if he indulged in ulterior projects concerning the motherly and daughterly affection arising between them, kept the secret strictly to himself.

"At present, not a word—at present mum! Ellen deserves some punishment," was the frequent result of his self-communing; "for entertaining so little confidence in the poor old man."

It was not always easy, however, to the candid veteran to conceal his participation in the secret so singularly revealed to him between his visit to Cambridge and the indiscretion of Walter; and, whenever he saw tears on the point of starting from the fine eyes of his beautiful daughter-in-law, he could scarcely forbear exclaiming, "Don't fret my dear, don't fret! True love seldom runs smooth, they say. But when two young folks are agreed, and money is not wanting, matters must come straight at last!"

Sometimes, when Ellen was in better spirits after one of her long interviews with Mrs. Hamlyn, he found it equally difficult to refrain from quizzing her concerning her flushed cheeks and unusual gaiety.

"You look so blooming this morning, my dear Nelly," said he, one day on her return to the hotel after having officiated as *chaperon* to Lydia while sitting for her picture to Francis Grant; as a present for the Marchioness of Dartford, "that I could almost fancy it was you, and not Lydia, who had been spending a couple of hours with the eyes of her faithful swain fascinated upon her face! Pray, was Master Watty with you at Grant's?"

"I have not seen Captain Hamlyn these two days," replied Mrs. Hamilton, with some degree of resentment.

"Why, you won't pretend to tell me, my dear (for as tragedy queenish as you may choose to look on the occasion), that you are not aware the handsome captain is dying for love of you?"

"Not what I consider love. Captain Hamlyn treated me with distant civility till he saw me assume a better place in society than he supposed, would be conceded to so insignificant a personage. It was not till I had been stamped current by the homage of a fashionable fribble, like Mr. Vernon, that he began to pay me attention; and Lord Edward Sutton's admiration was necessary to bring him to his present stage of gallantry."

"Well, well! whether his passion be natural or artificial, or, rather, whether it be spontaneous or derivative, admit that it becomes him admirably. Walter's the handsomest young fellow in

Lon'on, let t'other be whom he may; and I feel pretty sure that if he didn't bear the hateful name of Hamlyn (against which you seem to have set your obstinate little mind), you'd be acting Lady Bountiful, some twenty years hence, at Dean Park, long a'ter we old fogrums are dead and forgotten."

The fluctuating colour on the cheek of poor Ellen betrayed the emotions which the colonel had been maliciously bent upon calling forth by this exordium.

"But we're going to have a much worse specimen of the family on our hands shortly!" added the colonel, intently watching her. "The lad who's been sapping all this time at Cambridge, finding himself likely to make a bad job of it, chooses to sham ill; and his family have been gulled into persuading him, forsooth, to ask for holidays! For my part, I hate pedants, of every shape, sort, and size; and shan't find my way half so often to Cavendish Square, now that we're to have the drawing-room littered with Latin and Greek books, and the solemn phiz of a Mr. Gradus, established there in eternal rebuke of our ignorance. Just imagine *me*, who find it a hard matter to speak dictionary English, stuck up opposite a fellow who fancies he can decline his nouns and conjugate his verbs so much better than *his* neighbours!"

"I was well acquainted with Henry Hamlyn in Italy," said Mrs. Hamilton with a degree of effort that crimsoned her face as she attempted to raise her full-orbed eyes towards the searching glance of the colonel, "and can assure you, sir, that he is nothing of a pedant."

"Oh! he isn't, eh? Well, so much the better! And pray, is he as good-looking as Walter?"

"In my opinion, far handsomer, for he has an expressive and intellectual countenance; while the good looks of Captain Hamlyn are the mere result of features and complexion."

"A favourable result, at all events, as I suspect that pretty finical miss of Lord Vernon's is beginning to find out! Last night, when Watley was taking so much pains about finding that seat for you at the Ancient Concert, Lady Vernon and her daughter looked as if they would like to mince you into *very* small pieces. But tell me, Nelly! How came this chap with the intellectual countenance to be let off so cheap in Italy, between two such pretty widows as yourself and Lady Burlington?"

"Lady Burlington has little temptation to marry again. *She* has two children to occupy her thoughts and affections. Even were she so inclined, Henry Hamlyn, who is eight years younger than herself, besides being a Protestant and son to a man she abhors, is the last person likely to make her a suitable husband. With respect to myself—" she paused.

"Well, my dear! With respect to yourself?"

"I would rather not answer you; for it is not in my power to answer you sincerely," said she, with assumed firmness.

"Thank you, Nelly! Thank you, my child! That's just the straitfor'ard way in which I like to be treated by you! I'd rather you'd hit me a box of the ear, any day of the week, than palaver me with a syllable's worth of gammon. Well! I must see and judge for myself. We shall have the intellectual countenance here to-day, by dinner-time; and then, keep your secret, lady fair, if you can!"

Mrs. Hamilton replied by silently kissing his hand.

"I shan't see him to-night, however," said the colonel, laughing; "so don't try and coax me to be a good boy, before I've an opportunity of being a bad one. To-day's the grand let-off at the chairman's of the East India Company; and as the dinner is given expressly to *me*, I suppose I must go through the evening and my rubber with the big wigs asked to meet me; twenty at dinner, most likely, and only a quarter of a liver among the whole party! By-the-way, Nelly (I may as well tell you, for ten to one those chattering newspapers will, if I don't), that my poor old rajah has sent over funds to the company to buy me a service of plate as a token of gratitude and affection; and so, my dear, some day or other, when I'm in a better place, and you and your good man, whoever he may be, settled in the house in Portland Place, you'll have a few spoons and sauceboats to help you set up housekeeping."

Great was the disappointment to the colonel to find, the following morning from Ellen (who had purposely absented herself from Cavendish Square since the expectation of Henry's arrival), that a note from Lydia had already apprized her of his non-appearance.

But in return for this unsatisfactory intelligence, the colonel had strange news to communicate.

"I didn't expect a pleasant dinner yesterday!" said he. "Those kind of five-course affairs are seldom agreeable. But, by George! old Launchington's was worse than I'd bargained for. I suppose the dinners in Cavendish Square have rather spoiled one for such matters."

"Is Mr. Launchington's table, then, so bad a one?" demanded Ellen, in the simplicity of her heart.

"Oh! 'twasn't that, my dear! Even at a state dinner, one is always sure of a boiled chicken or slice of roast meat, to prevent one's quarrelling with one's fare. The dinners in this house are no great things; with their eternal fried whittings and tepid lamb-cutlets—but you never hear me complain. No! no! what I disliked so much yesterday was the company."

"I should have thought that, in such a house, you would be sure of meeting old colleagues?"

"I did, my dear! to the tune of a round dozen, which I was all the more sorry for, seeing that one don't like to expose one's self before old acquaintances!"

Mrs. Hamilton was surprised. She could imagine but one way in which a gentleman ever exposes himself at a dinner-party; yet had never seen her father-in-law in the slightest degree influenced by wine.

"You see, they weren't exactly *all* old Indians!" resumed the colonel. "Besides our own comfortable dozen, there were a few city grandees, and a monkey-man or two invited to put round the jokes, as in the old jovial days a good fellow used to be asked to help in putting round the wine. As ill-luck would have it, one of these prating parrots was seated opposite to me; and took occasion to address so many of his jokes to me, and to ask so many idle questions, as a pretence for lugging 'em in, that I suppose I looked early, or took him up short; for, by way of excuse for having tried to scrape acquaintance, he alluded to having dined with me at Hamlyn's. And so he *had*, as I admitted (when he brought it to my mind by some allusion to Lord Cawley); that time I ran up with Sir Robert Maitland, and left *you* at Ormeau."

"I remember you dined there with a large party," observed Ellen, who was pouring out the tea.

"Well, my dear! no sooner had this ill-favoured, officious little monkey coupled the names of Hamlyn and Lord Crawley, than a pompous, pursy old fellow (a Sir Benjamin something or other, who was sitting near us), flared up into such an attack upon Hamlyn, that I was forced to take up his cudgels and lay about me in a style that's always disagreeable when one's enjoying a sociable party. But my man wasn't inclined to knock under, even when he saw me in such a deuse of a passion; and didn't scruple to say that Hamlyn had sold his city colleagues to government; that the little man in black (Flimflam, I think they called him), would attest that the ambitious banker was going to be created Lord Scrip; and that in return for this empty distinction, he had withdrawn his parliamentary support from a question in which he was pledged, heart, soul, and honour, to advocate the interests of the great moneyed community in which he lives, and moves, and has his being! 'Let Richard Hamlyn only show his face in the city after the perpetration of the apostasy he is said to meditate,' said this stuffy old, Sir Benjamin (a Falstaff without his wit!), 'and he may chance to have things thrown in his teeth he will find it difficult to digest!'"

"But is Mr. Hamlyn about to be created Lord Scrip?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton, in some surprise.

"If so, he is a greater ass than I take him for!" retorted the colonel. "Hamlyn's a valuable man in a plain way; but what the deuse should a fellow who has spent his life behind his counter in Lombard-street, have to do in the House of Peers? A banker lord would be a joke for a pantomime, or the comic annual."

"But when you said all this to your portly Sir Benjamin?"

"It didn't give me the means of contradicting his assertion that Hamlyn has pledged himself to government to support the Foreign Securities Bill; which, if he have, all Sir Benjamin said about him wouldn't be a quarter bad enough, for he would have to speak and vote again his conscience, and the interests he had given his word to maintain to the last breath in his body!"

"Unless I am much mistaken; no pledge and no promise of that description would be sacred in Mr. Hamlyn's eyes, if a coronet were dancing before them in an opposite direction!" observed Ellen. "In defending his cause, therefore, dearest sir, I trust you were not tempted to commit yourself by denial?"

"Commit myself? to be sure I was tempted!" interrupted Colonel Hamilton. "I told Sir Benjamin Backbite, as loud as I could say it, I'd pawn my life Hamlyn had never entertained for a single moment such dishonourable intentions; and called on the little chatterbox to second my defence of the man whose bread and salt, by his own account, he had broken."

"And did Mr. Flimflam advocate his cause?"

"So far from it, my dear Nelly, that he admitted his belief of every syllable of the rumour; nay, he was base enough to confirm the notion (which I saw was pretty general throughout the party) by declaring that, at the dinner at which we had both met Lord Crawley, in Cavendish Square, the Home Secretary and Hamlyn were closeted cheek by jowl in the boudoir for more

than half an hour in closest confab; which ended with the minister's saying to the banker, in his hearing, 'We reckon upon your voice as well as your vote, my dear Hamlyn; and what you so anxiously solicit shall be done without delay.'"

"A safe and pleasant guest to receive into one's house!" observed Mrs. Hamilton, with an air of disgust.

"Ay, but he'd better have kept his tongue from wagging, for I gave him a piece of mine, which was not quite so satiny as he could wish! But, by George! his is the sort of pendulum that nothing will keep at a stand-still!"

"It seems, then, that others are beginning to entertain, concerning Mr. Hamlyn, an opinion similar to my own?" observed Ellen, with a smile.

"The worst of it is, I'm afraid there's some truth in the report. I didn't heed the blustering of old Sir Toby Belch, nor the slaver of the backbiting punster. But after dinner, when Launcehington took occasion to say something civil to me in private about his regret that anything unpleasant should have occurred to me at his table, he added, he'd rather I should have heard the ill-news elsewhere, which couldn't long fail of reaching my ears. 'I'm afraid, my dear colonel,' says he, 'Hamlyn's a lost man among us! In the great world, political intrigues are common. We hear of this duke or that lord turning his coat for a riband, or a place at court. But among commercial men, a man's word must be as good as his bond. Unless the columns that support the great fabric of mercantile strength in this country are upright and steadfast, there's an end of the credit of Old England.'"

"Mr. Hamlyn had pledged himself, then, to his city colleagues, to support their interests on this question?"

"Pledged himself? Why, he held the stakes, as it were, for the rest. Never was there anything like their confidence in him! The business comes on to-morrow. I wouldn't be in the gallery of the house for a trifle."

"But, surely, with the friendly feelings you entertain towards Mr. Hamlyn," observed Ellen, in spite of her antipathy to the banker, jealous of the honour of the family name of him she loved, "surely you may be yet in time to alter his determination? See him, dear sir, persuade him—"

"I'm afraid such arguments as mine, my dear, would have little avail against the determination of a hard-headed man like Hamlyn!" replied the colonel. "No doubt he's made up his mind on premises he considers good."

"But you may show him better."

"Me, my dear? not I, Nelly! I haven't the gift of the gab, and am but a batter-brains at the best."

"If you were at least to try?" pleaded Ellen, courageously. "Half the objects in this world are lost for want of a struggle. We are too fond of concluding evil to be inevitable. For my part, I have the worst opinion of Mr. Hamlyn. I believe him to be base, calculating, heartless. I believe he would sacrifice wife, child, friend, to his sordid speculations. I believe he would cause his children to pass through fire to Moloch, and see the existence of his sons blighted forever, to secure the stability of his house of business. But there are arguments for all natures and capacities! This man, whose

ears are shut to the cry of nature, is open to the influence of every breath of worldly opinion. Tell him how he is thought of; tell him how he is spoken of; tell him that the very honours for which he is bartering his good name will be spat upon and despised by the very fools he is intent upon dazzling; that he will be received into the high order he is ambitious of attaining with contempt and mistrust; and thus, believe me, dear sir—(believe me!)—you will obtain an ascendency over his mind. But what makes you smile?" said she, perceiving a sudden mistiness in the old man's eyes, and a singular expression pervading his countenance.

"I was thinking that I never saw any one look more like a queen than you do at this moment!" ejaculated the colonel. "Ah, Nelly! Bob knew better than his father when he proposed to give me such a daughter. Why, *why* did I hurry him into the grave, with such a wife, and such happy destinies awaiting him in this world!"

"You did *not*, sir," replied Mrs. Hamilton, in a more subdued voice. "It was the work of that man whom you mistakenly call a friend. It was the doing of Hamlyn."

Colonel Hamilton shrugged his shoulders. "I'm always loath to believe the worst of my fellow-creatures," said he. "I think now, as I thought the moment my poor son's letter and your noble remonstrances arrived at Ghazerpore, that Hamlyn acted for the best and judged for the worst. But if he complete the business attributed to him yesterday by those two fellows, Launchington's fat and lean kine, he'll be acting for the worst, and no mistake! As to going and arguing with him, Nelly—by George! I shouldn't have the face to do it. 'T would be like arguing with a fellow whose hand one found in one's pocket. The pickpocket I should be sure to knock down; and I'm a most afraid I might be tempted to use some ugly word to Hamlyn, such as would ill become the lips of the father of those two poor boys; to whom he opened his house and heart when the deuse another soul they had to care for 'em, or give 'em a Christmas home!"

"Still," pleaded Mrs. Hamilton, "the truest act of friendship we can perform towards a man is to undertake towards him some painful office from which others recede."

She was interrupted by untimely visitors. Miss Creswell and her young charge, who were sometimes despatched, in the course of their morning's walk, with messages to Mrs. Hamilton, made their appearance; for the colonel, in his cordial love of young people, was beginning to transfer to Harriet the fondness and good offices he had exercised in favour of her sister; and the young girl, who, amid the hurry and occupation created in Cavendish Square by the approaching wedding, was somewhat overlooked at home, was never happier than when sent on an errand to the Hamiltons.

The note of which she was the bearer merely regarded an arrangement for accompanying Lydia that evening to the Marchioness of Dartford's, who had forwarded her invitation to Ellen through her daughter-in-law. But the real purport of Harriet's mission was soon apparent to Mrs. Hamilton, when her young friend suddenly exclaimed,

"Is it not provoking, dear Colonel Hamilton, that, after all, we are not to have Harry in town? Instead of coming to amuse himself among us,

he is gone down to Dean, where he won't find a soul to speak to at this time of year."

"The deuse he is?" cried the colonel, stealing a furtive glance towards Ellen, who was wonderfully busy refolding Mrs. Hamlyn's note into the shape of a miniature dunce's cap.

"Think how dull he will be! Not a creature at Burlington to welcome him but old Carol—at home, only the bare walls. Even Dr. Markham, from Mrs. Markham's approaching confinement, disinclined to leave the parsonage! How much happier my brother would have been here in London!"

"You forget, my dear," interposed Miss Creswell, with professional wisdom, "that your brother has serious pursuits which fully occupy his time, and dispose him against frivolous diversions."

"That's the very thing, my dear good ma'am!" cried the colonel. "'Tis because he has been duncing himself into an atrophy over his serious pursuits that we want to get him among us, to be nursed and petted. Frivolous diversions are bark and steel to him! The bow's been bent too far, and if we don't relax the strings they may chance to crack; and *then* where are we, pray, with our serious pursuits? Well! I suppose this nonsense of his will cost me another journey to bring him to his senses! I don't know what I should ha' done with sons of my own to deal with, for even these boys of Hamlyn's make a penny-postman of the poor old man."

As soon as Harriet and the governess had departed, carrying with them Mrs. Hamilton's acceptance of the evening's engagement, Ellen succeeded in persuading the colonel to leave the young recluse for a few days to the reaction of his feelings. She was afraid of an interview between Henry and her father-in-law, unless in her presence. Aware of the rash nature of Colonel Hamilton's well-affectioned impulses, she was apprehensive he might commit her by cheering the sadness of the invalid at her expense, with insinuations of an attachment on her part, which, tacitly rejected as she had been, a sense of self-respect forbade her to confirm. Moreover, with the promptitude of a superior mind, she had already decided upon the course she intended to adopt, both as regarded Henry Hamlyn and the imputed turpitude of his father.

Within an hour after their breakfast conference, she had despatched Johnston to Euston Square, with a letter to be forwarded by the railway, which he was to take measures for getting immediately despatched by messenger from Rugby to Ovington—a letter conveying to Henry Hamlyn the tidings of his father's political dereliction, and her own exhortations that he would instantly start for London, and use his influence against the consummation of a step so irretrievable.

For Ellen Hamilton was keenly alive to the consequences of such tergiversation. Though still firm in her determination never to become a banker's wife, she could not forbear cherishing such vague hopes and expectations as brighten the reveries of those whose affections are deeply engaged; and her own future prospects appeared too closely bound up in those of Henry Hamlyn, and those of Henry himself (independent of all selfish considerations) were too dear to her not to make her keenly sensitive to the possibility of dishonour to the family name.

Much as she despised Richard Hamlyn, she was aware of the high credit attached to his

house; the fair reputation attending himself. Even at Ormeau, even among the Cossingtons, by whom he was personally disliked, she had heard him spoken of with the respect due to integrity and worth. As a public man, she had hitherto felt compelled to consider him with the regard which, in private, painful experience instructed her to withhold.

Fervent, therefore, were her entreaties to Henry, if he valued the renown of his father and consideration of his family, to exert himself to the utmost.

"I am not afraid," wrote Mrs. Hamilton, "that you will attribute this suggestion to any weak desire to see you again. Situated as we have been, and are, such a meeting could only be fraught with pain and humiliation for both. You, I am sure, will appreciate my desire that the name I once fondly hoped would become my own should stand spotless and unblemished in the history of the country; for this recreancy of your father will form a portion of its history! When a man betrays the interests of his order for interests of his own, whether that order be chivalrous or simply a concentration of commercial energies, he becomes important through the greatness of his infamy. In this country, the aristocracy of wealth is beginning to be nicely balanced against that of descent; and a few generations may give it the ascendancy. I am assured that the measure about to be lost through your father's apostasy will strike a fatal blow at our commercial credit in foreign countries; and wherever canvassed—to whatever remote spot the vibration of the injury may extend—his name, *his name*, which is *yours*, will be connected with all the calamities, all the execrations that ensue! Dearest Henry, prevent this! Exert your strong powers of reasoning to convince him that it is never too late to recede from a premeditated act of baseness. Reward his harsh dealing towards you by saving him from the consummation of an inextinguishable error!"

This letter once on its way, she was happier. It appeared to her unaccountable, while passing a portion of the day with the Hamlyns, to see them so joyous and unsuspecting, with an evil impending over the family, of which herself and Colonel Hamilton alone seemed cognizant. In the drawing-room, in Cavendish Square, she found, as usual, Mrs. Hamlyn, Walter, Lydia, Lord Dartford, who, after a slight expression of regret at their disappointments about Henry, returned to the discussion of hampercloths, Alençon lace, orange flowers, special licenses, and the number of *fleurons* which produced the surest combination of lustre and lightness in the setting of a diamond coronet, which her arrival had interrupted. In the gayety of her youthful and innocent heart, Lydia was imbibing, from the joyous, high-spirited young fellow to whom she had pledged her affections, some portion of the worldly levity inseparable from his brilliant position; and if Mrs. Hamlyn occasionally directed towards the happy, thoughtless couple one of the saddened looks which those who have suffered much let fall upon the inexperienced novices in life for whom all that glitters is still gold, even her gravity at times gave way under the contagion of the joy and prosperity that seemed to irradiate her children.

Lydia looked so happy—so beautiful—so full of bright and kindly thoughts—as she sat with her hand enclasped in that of the noble bridegroom who had chosen her from the world, that

the mother's heart overflowed with tenderness, and the sunken rocks of life were for a moment hidden by the tide.

As Mrs. Hamilton passed the dining-room to return to her carriage, humbly escorted by Captain Hamlyn, who adored as the future Lady Edward Sutton the beautiful woman he had disparaged as Bob Hamilton's widow, she caught sight through the open door of the richly-laid table, which Ramsay was preparing for a dinner-party, with all its luxury of damask, crystal, china, plate—its groaning sideboard, and glittering dumb-waiters.

"And these are the gewgaws," mused she, deaf to the tender nonsense Walter was whispering under his mustaches, "for which this man is sullying his conscience! These be thy gods, oh Israel! To think that hundreds and hundreds of men and women are induced to degrade themselves by debt, and harass their lives with remorse, in order that their ostentation may be graced by unmeaning gauds like these!"

That day she dined with her father-in-law, at Lord Cossington's. During the lifetime of his father, the income of the marquis was circumscribed, and the right-thinking couple had sufficient regard for their own dignity to live within it. Their quiet, comfortable house in Wilton Crescent was accordingly unembellished by the brilliant novelties and snowy elegance imparting distinction to the banker's establishment. A few pleasant friends at their board, a good plain dinner served upon it, and the cheerful conversation sure to ensue from such a combination, made the evening pass far more agreeably than was ever the case in Cavendish Square, where the mind of the host was always secretly intent upon the *spectacle* of his entertainment, and the mind of the hostess, upon the fluctuations in that of the host.

The only drawback upon Ellen's pleasure in the little social circle in Wilton Crescent, into which she was already welcomed as a friend, while the beautiful children of the marchioness climbed familiarly on her knees, was the certainty that her presence had driven Lord Edward from his brother's fireside, in the dread of compromising his happiness by still farther intimacy with her who had explicitly informed him her affections were engaged to another. She was almost sorry when the carriage arrived to convey her to Lady Dartford's for the remainder of the evening. The high spirits of the excited marquis, and the bustle of the house of feasting, suited less with her present depression than the sober conversational habits of the society of the Cossingtons.

The following day, at an early hour for the routine of morning visits, Henry Hamlyn was announced in the drawing-room in St. James's street; and but that the Duchess of Elvaston, in pursuance of her old-fashioned habits, was already sitting with her, Ellen would have scarcely found it possible to refrain from an exclamation of horror at the change wrought by the lapse of the last three months in the person of her lover. They had parted on the day of the meeting of Parliament, when Henry hurried up from Cambridge to meet her at the Tower Stairs, and conduct her to her hotel; parted, full of hope, and happiness, and health; and now, there was something in the haggard countenance of her guest, bringing so powerfully to mind the wasted looks of poor Robert Hamilton in his last illness, that Ellen was

forced to press her hands stringently upon her heart and pause for breath, ere she could resume with the duchess the conversation his arrival had interrupted. Nor was the coherency and composure of Henry improved by gathering from their conversation the name of the noble matron so maternal in her deportment towards his own Ellen; for, common report having apprized him of the passion of Lord Edward Sutton, he fancied he discerned a tone of motherly affection in her grace's address to Mrs. Hamilton.

Meanwhile, the colonel, to whom the arrival of the new visitor had been duly announced, bustled in with a thousand cordial welcomes for one with whom, notwithstanding his intimacy with the other branches of the family, circumstances had hitherto prevented his becoming acquainted; and, though he had seen Henry only a few minutes the preceding year, in the course of a morning visit in Cavendish Square, he received him more as a son than a stranger. It was impossible for a man of his jocose disposition not to steal one little look at Ellen, to see how she bore his unexpected arrival; and a sad disappointment it proved, when, instead of the conscious smiles and "blushes celestial rosy red" he had anticipated, he found a deathlike paleness pervade the countenance of his daughter-in-law, who, just then, resembled a statue of Niobe rather than a living woman.

In order to afford an opportunity for the young couple to recover themselves and exchange a few happy words of tenderness, Colonel Hamilton was suddenly seized with a violent fit of gallantry towards the Duchess of Elvaston; insisting upon showing her some volumes of Italian engravings brought over by Ellen, which he had only been able to extricate from the custom-house a few days before.

This had the desired effect. While the duchess accepted his proposal to examine them more at her ease on a large table near the window, Henry Hamlyn, in an abrupt and agitated manner, approached Mrs. Hamilton. A few whispered sentences served to convey a world of painful intelligence.

"Thank you heartily for your warning!" said he, without preamble. "I appreciate all that is noble and forgiving in your effort on the occasion. In vain! My interference has been wholly fruitless! I have seen him. I have remonstrated—pleaded—argued—with the utmost respect, but the utmost warmth; and all, *all* in vain! He is determined to lose himself! He whose independence of mind and uprightness of principle I venerated as those of a demi-god. I could have borne all but *this*, Ellen! The ruin of my earthly happiness was nothing to *this*! I have suffered much. My health is failing—my faculties are broken; and now— But I am too selfish in vexing you with my afflictions!" said he, stopping short, when he beheld tears stealing down the marble cheeks of Mrs. Hamilton. "I would not leave London, dearest Ellen, without thanking and blessing you!"

"Going so soon?" faltered Mrs. Hamilton, unprepared for this announcement.

"What would you have me do? I cannot trust myself, dearest, to stay here! I have not courage to hear my father's name become the fable of the clubs—the scorn of his old friends—the jest of the newspapers! As I came hither, just now, I met—But no matter! It is not for *you* to take part in my humiliations! Farewell!"

It was impossible for Mrs. Hamilton to with-

hold her hand; nor, indeed, had she voice or self-possession at that moment to hazard an attempt at detaining him. Colonel Hamilton and the duchess, however, who were turning over the rustling leaves of Piranesi, for life and death, saw nothing that was going on; and when, roused to attention by the ringing of the bell, touched by Mrs. Hamilton for the door to be opened, the colonel turned suddenly round to shake the parting hand extended towards him by Henry, he was deterred from the smallest tendency to his habitual explosions of jocularity, by the expression of anguish only too cruelly delineated in the hollow countenance of his young visitor.

"Where are you going, Harry?" said he. "Have you a horse here, or a cab?"

"I am going to Knightsbridge—I am going to see my brother!" was the faltered reply; and Colonel Hamilton saw that the poor fellow had so much difficulty in giving utterance to even these hurried words, that, with the view of concealing his emotion from the spectacled duchess, he resumed his task of turning over the leaves as fussily as though the world contained no object of greater interest to him than the ruins of the Capitol or the *contadine* of the Campagna.

"A younger son, I presume, of Mr. Hamlyn of Dean Park?" said the duchess, after his exit. "Those young people bear a very high character. The young Marchioness of Dartford, that is to be, is very much thought of by all the members of her new family; and my son Richard, who is in the Life Guards, tells me the eldest son is one of the smartest officers in the Blues. *This* seems a very gentlemanly young man, resembling his mother a little, whom I remember a most pleasing, pretty woman. In his father's business, I conclude?"

"At present, only one of the first scholars in the kingdom, and like to be the senior wrangler of his year," replied the colonel, proudly. "But, some day or other, he will be in the bank and in Parliament; and then, I venture to predict to your grace that we shall hear news of him!"

Sir Henry Middlebury himself would scarcely have proved a more advantageous interlocutor at that moment than did the good old humdrum duchess; who, at the word Parliament—(so important a watchword in the ears of all the Suttons!)—found as many questions to ask as would have filled three pages of Pinnock or Mangnall, concerning the prospects of the callow senator—his principles, his views, his education, his private tutor, his public, nay, even his preparatory school.

While poor Ellen was gradually recovering her self-possession sufficiently for the parting compliments about to be required of her, Colonel Hamilton persevered in his negatives and affirmatives; varied only by an occasional "I rather think so," or, "We shall see!" and a glance over his shoulder towards the fireplace; where Ellen, with her face turned towards the looking-glass, was smoothing her raven bandeaux, as a pretext for wiping from her eyes and cheeks the tears which not even *her* energetic fortitude was at that moment able to repress!

CHAPTER XXII.

"I would share his joys;
But make his griefs my own—all, all my own!"

SOUTHEY:

DEEPLY afflicted by the altered appearance of

poor Henry, and sympathizing heart and soul in his present anxiety, Mrs. Hamilton felt wholly unable to resume her daily routine of occupations. The colonel, had luckily, an appointment at the barracks in the Regent's Park with Lord Richard Sutton; who, at dinner at the Cossingtons, the preceding day, had insisted upon introducing the old soldier to the riding-school, to his chargers and Irish bloodhounds; and she was, consequently, at leisure to hasten to Cavendish Square, and offer all the comfort in her power to the poor mother, whose anxiety, she conceived, must equal her own.

But, to her surprise and vexation, Mrs. Hamlyn was absent. The approaching marriage of her daughter afforded her a thousand trivial but peremptory occupations; and Ellen contrived to discover, by cross-questioning Harriet and Miss Creswell, that Henry had not seen his mother since his return from the city; that they knew nothing of his movements; and that the whole party were going in the evening to a concert at the house of Lady Vernon.

Nothing could have afforded stronger evidence of the utter ignorance of Mrs. Hamlyn as to the peculiar position of her husband! She was a woman who at all times occupied herself little with the interests of public life; and the slightness of sympathy between herself and her husband prevented those natural confidences which must have rendered the crisis as trying to *her* as to himself. It was too ordinary a circumstance with her to see his brow overclouded, when leaving his home for business in the morning, to create any uneasiness in her mind; and the interview of remonstrance between him and his son, in Lombard-street, was as yet unknown to her.

Nor was she likely to be enlightened concerning the impending mischief by the rumours of society. The apostasy of Hamlyn from the cause of his city colleagues was, of course, unsuspected; except in a limited circle of Parliamentary men, among whom it had been bruited by the connivance of ministers, expressly in the hope of shaking the opposition of others, who, in questions of commercial interest, were apt to be influenced by the opinions of the member for Bars-thorpe. By these means, had the report reached the ears of Sir Benjamin Bondwell; and, through him, struck consternation to the heart of Colonel Hamilton. But the majority of the house, aware that the question was to be brought before them that night, fully expected to see Richard Hamlyn get up as before; to support with his usual vigour of oratory and extent of information the line of policy he had so long and conscientiously upheld.

That the discovery of his sudden secession, in connexion with the report of his approaching ennoblement, would array against him a whole host of exulting enemies, Mrs. Hamilton could not doubt; and sincerely did she regret to find that Lydia and her mother were likely to be startled by intelligence of such a nature, under the roof of persons whom she knew to be their foes. It was more than probable, if the division took place at an early hour, that many members would arrive in Grosvenor Place, open-mouthed from the house, with tidings of the singular self-sacrifice of Hamlyn the banker!

Address a letter to Mrs. Hamlyn on the subject, she dared not. It is so difficult to allude, in words of a nature to meet the eye of a wife, to any dereliction from honour on the part of a husband!

Moreover, there was so great a probability that any letter brought by one of Colonel Hamilton's servants to Grosvenor Square might fall into the hands of the banker, that it seemed impossible to hazard a hint upon the subject nearest her heart.

"After all, *women* are not made responsible for the political delinquencies of their husbands!" said she; "and the society of the Vernons is composed of people too well bred to afford the slightest indication to dear Mrs. Hamlyn of the contempt likely to be provoked by the paltering of this despicable man."

She had herself agreed to accompany Lady Cossington that night to the Duchess of Elvaston's private box at Covent Garden; and in the fear of provoking the remarks of the colonel, if she excused herself, judged it better to enjoy her abstraction *there*, in pretended attention to the play, than remain at home; cultivating her own uneasiness, and exciting that of her father-in-law.

Poor Ellen had, however, for once, nothing to fear from the colonel's jocularity. So deeply was he affected by a circumstance tending to discredit the man in whom he had placed such implicit confidence, and afflict the family he loved best in the world, that, so far from indulging in his usual pleasantries, or enjoying, as was his wont, a good play seen from a good box, he remained as still and silent as Ellen herself, till the entrance of Lord Cossington towards the end of the afterpiece.

"I thought there was a division to-night?" said his wife, whom he had forewarned not to expect him.

"There is! But, to my great surprise, I am not wanted, and have paired off. We have it hollow to-night! Thanks to an admirable speech from Hamlyn, the banker, ministers will carry it triumphantly."

And forthwith they began discussing the performance. For there was nothing to surprise Lady Cossington in her husband's announcement. She knew that Hamlyn was of their party, on many occasions an able supporter of government; and it was only natural that he should make an able speech in favour of a ministerial measure. Colonel Hamilton knew better than to provoke explanations by a single inquiry; and Ellen was, consequently, secure from the cutting remarks she had so much apprehended. She was among people for whom the moneyed interests of the country constituted no especial interest, and for whom a ministerial triumph was all in all. She only trusted that Lydia and her mother might be safe among those equally circumscribed in their sympathies.

Next morning, the Hamiltons woke with that vague sense of disquietude and trouble which arises from the backslidings of a friend. Neither of them chose to refer, as they sat at breakfast, to the subject which occupied the thoughts of both; and as the newspaper lying on the table was the leading ministerial journal, it adverted to the debate of the night before, as chiefly remarkable for the powerfully-argumentative speech of the honourable member for Bars-thorpe; complimenting the ministry and the country on his recently-enlightened views, and remarking that it was not possible for a man of such strong understanding and consistent principles to remain permanently opposed to a measure tending to the tranquillization of the public mind, and securing a vested right of the most sacred nature and importance.

It was useless, therefore, to refer to such an organ for any indication of the state of public opinion towards Hamlyn; and Ellen respected the feelings of her companion too much to propose sending for an opposition paper to ascertain how the matter was regarded in more liberal quarters.

"I don't much like going to Cavendish Square to-day!" said the colonel, as they rose from the breakfast-table. "Did I understand you right, my dear Nelly, that Harry was going out of town again? Doesn't he mean to dine with me? doesn't he mean to—"

"I knew no more than yourself!" replied Mrs. Hamilton, in a faint voice. "He appeared yesterday to be in a state bordering on distraction. All that we regret in his father's proceedings, is to him a source of far bitterer mortification."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" interrupted the colonel, in his turn. "A noble heart, I take it; a high-toned mind; too good by half for a banker. Nelly! we *must* do or say something to comfort him. Sit down and write him a bit of a note. Persuade him to dine with us to-day."

"Any demonstration of kindness on my part, dearest sir, would only aggravate the evil!" replied Mrs. Hamilton, deeply touched by the affectionate tone of the old man. "Better leave him to himself! Nevertheless, I own I am most anxious for news of his movements. If, therefore, you dislike going to Cavendish Square (where, however, at this time of day you would be secure from meeting Mr. Hamlyn), could you not call upon his son at Knightsbridge; or upon Lord Dartford, or—"

"Can I speak with you a minute, sir?" interrupted the voice of Johnston, who, just then, half opened the door.

"Come in, come in! No one here but Mrs. Hamilton. Come in, Johnston!" cried the colonel, almost angry at a hesitation which he attributed to punctilio established as a matter of etiquette by the waiters of the hotel. Still, however, the man hung back, even after his master had pettishly inquired what the deuce he was afraid of.

"I wished, colonel, to have a moment's conversation with you!" said he, forced at length to enter the room; and Mrs. Hamilton was astonished to perceive that the face of the gray-headed servant was blanched almost to the ghostliness exhibited by that of Henry Hamlyn the day before. In a moment, it occurred to her agonized heart that some mischance had befallen the object of her affections!

"Johnston!" said she, assuming a tone of firmness sorely belied by the tremor pervading her whole frame; "*pray* speak out! Do not be afraid of alarming me. I see how it is! You have bad news to communicate from Cavendish Square!"

"I have, indeed, ma'am," said he, almost sobbing. "Sad news, sad news! though I'm sure I don't know how the report should have reached you already! For the man who brought the account ran all the way, and is now breathless in the hall."

"What the deuce are you all talking about?" cried the colonel, becoming alarmed, yet angry with them and himself for his own agitation. "What news? What man? What's happened? Speak out!"

"He is not dead, sir, as was at first apprehended!" replied Johnston, little suspecting the anguish which his inexplicitness was inflicting

upon his young lady. "The surgeon who was with him in the coach had done no more than stanch the blood; so he could not by any means say the case was hopeless."

"Of whom are you talking?" persisted Colonel Hamilton, himself sickened by the agony of suspense; while Ellen fixed her eyes inquiringly on Johnston, totally incapable of pronouncing a syllable in elucidation of her fears.

"Of Mr. Hamlyn, sir! who has been desperately wounded in a duel. Mrs. Hamlyn, as soon as she could be made to understand what had happened, desired you might be instantly sent for."

"Why the deuce didn't you say so at first? Let the carriage come round, or stay—no! call a cab! I don't know what I'm thinking of, or saying. My hat, Johnston! Ellen! my poor child, I see by the joyful expression of your countenance for how dreadful a blow you had prepared yourself! But 'tis bad enough as 'tis. Poor Hamlyn! the father of such a family! Coming with me? That's well! I should have scarcely found courage for the scene, Nelly, unless you were by my side."

The information gradually, slowly, and sadly acquired by Colonel Hamilton in explanation of this afflicting summons, may as well be succinctly related to the reader. The Morning Post, while communicating, in so good a spirit, to the public the conversion of Mr. Hamlyn to the financial tenets of government, had considerably forbore to notice the grievous interruptions, hootings, howlings, bellowings, crowings, experienced by the member for Barsthorpe, in the course of a speech, which, had it been the result of conviction and good faith, was citable as a splendid effort of oratory. From the moment of driving his "filthy bargain," or, rather, of being driven into it, Hamlyn had been intent on the concoction of this effort of sophistry. Confiding, and with reason, in his own powers of dissimulation, he trusted to give to his act of treachery an air of conviction, recantation, repentance, and atonement; and entertained little doubt that the energy of his eloquence would recruit to his banner a portion at least of the habitual opponents of government.

Great, therefore, was his disappointment when, for the first time in his political career, he experienced the greatest difficulty in making himself heard. He had, of course, taken precautions that the smallest syllable of his discourse (which might have been aptly named "Hamlyn's Apology") should reach the ears, or, rather, the pens of the reporters, to ensure having justice done him on the morrow by the ministerial organs. Still, it was deeply humiliating to one accustomed to be listened to on questions of magnitude in that house, amid a silence which enabled him to hear a pin drop, to be assailed with outcries of so indecent a description as now met his ears. It was, in fact, a *charivari*, accomplished by assailants of the highest class and credit.

Nevertheless, he bore the attack in a manner very different from what might have been predicted of the member for Barsthorpe, who, in earlier years, had been twice placed in the custody of the Sergeant of the House. The baited bull neither tore up the ground under his feet, nor turned upon the foes who were bounding him into madness. Either his habitual hypocrisy enabled him to control all show of emotion, or he was overwhelmed by consciousness of his

degrading predicament. His speech was correctly given, but it had evidently been learned by rote, and was recited as an oration of Demosthenes may have been, after his practice, in presence of the roaring surges. No warmth—none of that nervous energy which must unite with logical deductions to form the perfect orator. His voice was now as passionless as habitually his countenance. With many present, his argumentative and self-sacrificing speech did but borrow new force from this stern immobility, resembling that of an antique statue of some sage of the schools, rather than the irritable energumen of modern parliaments. But his enemies thought otherwise. His enemies decided that Samson was shorn of his strength—that Hamlyn's sun was set.

Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires!

was the exhortation of the honourable member for Alverstoke (one of the wits of the house) to the Whig member who was to reply to the new mouthpiece of government; and, either following this advice or his own devices, the sarcastic orator proceeded to attack the apostate with a discharge of puny but poisoned arrows, which left him prostrate, like Gulliver martyred by Lilliputian darts.

A coarse apostrophe from Sir Benjamin Bondwell was still harder to be borne. The party spokesman had attacked a government measure, supported by the honourable member for Barsthorpe. The banker attacked his brother banker, openly, strongly, advisedly; describing the city as betrayed by one of its most favoured sons, and ending with "I am very grieved for thee, Jonathan, my brother."

All this was passively endured by Richard Hamlyn. Having sewed his courage to the sticking-place, he maintained his usual attitude in the house, conversing freely with one or two government men, to whom Lord Crawley had given their cue. Already the flattering unction of administrative thanks had been laid to his soul; for, whatever feelings his speech might have excited against himself, it had gained to the measure under his advocacy double the number of proselytes upon which they had reckoned; and a ministry cares about as much for the sufferings of its implements as a general for the life of the soldier he deputes to a forlorn hope!

At length, encouraged by his apparent tameness, the wit already referred to as stimulating the malice of others ventured to rise on his own account. After a humorous comparison of the honourable member for Barsthorpe to the thief who bit off his mother's ear at the foot of the gallows, he hazarded so pointed an allusion to the rumoured elevation of Mr. Hamlyn to the peerage, in reward for the sudden falling of the scales from his eyes at the prophetic touch of the first lord of the treasury, that a general cry of "Order!" and "Shame!" deadened the force of Hamlyn's spirited and eloquent refutation.

Fortunately for him, they had hit the invulnerable heel, and he was, consequently, enabled to defend himself in a style of indignation which brought down the cheers of the house, always generously susceptible to an injustice, and served still farther the purposes of government by the popularization of the measure in the person of its advocate.

But the cheers of the house expire in the lobby! There, the member becomes the man again;

and when, after a triumphant division, Richard Hamlyn hurried through the throng, he found himself contemplated by many with coldness, by some with undisguised contempt; while the stammered and awkward compliments of such of his parliamentary colleagues as had no personal interest in the question evinced more plainly than all the rest that what might be considered a triumph had better have been a failure!

His patience was now oozing from his spirit, drop by drop. As the excitement of a man under the influence of wine is stimulated by contact with the open air, in proportion as Hamlyn reapproached the common routine of life, and left behind him the factitious atmosphere of Parliament, where insult is *not* insult, or derision mockery, he became infuriated by the sense of his mortifications, as a man grows suddenly conscious of his bruises a certain time after a fall.

Just as he had been wounded to the quick by a civilly ceremonious bow from a man with whom he was accustomed to exchange familiar nods, Alberic Vernon passed him, laughing immoderately, arm and arm with the wicked wit by whom the question of the Scrip peerage had been so indiscreetly broached. That he was the subject of their merriment he could entertain no doubt; nor did he hesitate to damp the insolent mirth indulged at his expense, by instantly accusing them, and demanding from the honourable member for Alverstoke his authority for the report of his intended elevation to the peerage.

Alberic Vernon, to whom the officious squire of Dean Park had been rendered an object of contempt by the insolence of his parents, but who now loathed him as the father of the man reported to be betrothed to the beautiful woman by whom he had been ignominiously rejected, was far from regretting this occasion for a public retort.

"He heard it from *me*, sir!" said he, fiercely. "The fact was stated at my father's table by one of your intimate friends, whose name you will excuse me from mentioning, as I am happy to say that it is not the custom of the *Vernon family* to betray their associates."

Hamlyn was furious. The two insolent boys before him were inflamed with all the valour of Bellamy's hottest tumblers, while he was influenced by the still stronger stimulus of cold and deadly enmity against his kind—the friends who had abandoned him, the foes who had clamoured over his fall; and when the companion of Alberic Vernon, vexed at finding his weapon of offence snatched from his hand, persisted in his raillery, such words were in a moment exchanged between them as rendered explanations of a more deadly kind imminently indispensable.

It was past midnight. The dispute had occurred in so public a place, that there could be little doubt of such interference between the parties as uniformly protects and justifies the blustering of modern senators (who, like heralds of old, and Macbeth in modern times, bear a charmed life!), unless a hostile meeting could be arranged before the quarrel got wind.

"We must forestall the newspapers!" was the first remark of Alberic Vernon, as the "friend" of the honourable member for Alverstoke; and the individual whom Hamlyn had sought in haste in the coffee-room, as at once an obsequious ally of government, and too heavily indebted to his firm to refuse assistance, instantly repair-

ed with Vernon to the Travellers, to arrange the preliminaries for a meeting the following morning, at eight o'clock, in Battersea Fields.

When Hamlyn reached home, the excitement produced by this disastrous succession of events was still whirling in his brain and gnawing his heart's core. Fortunately, the family was at rest. Mrs. Hamlyn had appeared at Lady Vernon's concert only in obedience to his orders; and, having been harassed by the pertinacious interrogations of Sir Henry Middlebury (who, knowing few people in the room, had attached himself to her side, not only to offer his congratulations and inquire the names of all the performers, and the various schools of art in which they had received their musical education, but the counties in which the Marquis of Dartford's estates were situated and the connexions of his family), had hastened to her pillow; and Hamlyn, dismissing the footman who usually sat up for him, with express instructions that Ramsay should bring him his shaving-water at a quarter to seven in the morning, was left the only person waking in the house—alone, with the tremendous consciousness that it was, perhaps, the last night he might ever pass under its roof! Not that his soul was easily depressed by depressing presentiments; and his irritation not having yet subsided, the preponderating feeling in his heart was to pursue, retaliate, exterminate!

The banker had forgotten that He who assumes to himself the privilege of Vengeance might exterminate in his turn! Moreover, the leading characteristic of Hamlyn's mind was at all times its sanguine self-reliance. Like most people who put not their trust in Providence—like most people reliant on the intervention of Chance—it cost him little more to expect miracles from its operation, than trifles. Half of the errors of his life arose from this rash confidence. All he had misappropriated of the property of his clients, he *firmly expected* to replace. He was fully persuaded that some happy combination of luck would enable him to repair the disorder he had created. And now, with a duel on his hands—a duel with a young and adroit antagonist—a duel in which public feeling, if not the cause of justice, would be wholly on the adverse side—he confidently expected to despatch his business in Battersea Fields as coolly, methodically, and triumphantly, as his business on the Stock Exchange!

His utmost efforts, therefore, towards "setting his house in order" consisted in addressing a few lines to Spilsby, with instructions on certain points of business to be despatched on the morrow, in case he was unable to reach Lombard-street at an early hour; which he determined to forward into the city by the same conveyance that took him to the residence of his second, the Honourable Colonel Frampton, who had promised to drive him to the ground.

He next committed to the flames a few papers from his bureau, which were not calculated for the scrutiny of his family in case he should meet with mischance, and have to resign his keys to the keeping of his wife. The bloodless nature of most duels arising out of parliamentary squabbles seemed to ensure him against anything *beyond* this. On recalling to mind the various hostile meetings which had occurred for the last twenty years, under similar provocation, he could not remember *one* in which the interference of seconds had not been of the most exemplary nature.

Nevertheless, as his excitement subsided, and his thirst for vengeance grew slack under the influence of anxiety touching the unfavourable impression the administration of a severe lesson to his antagonist might produce on his reputation as a man of business, his spirits became somewhat depressed. Ere he retired to the small bedroom which, for some years past, he had occupied, on the plea of the disturbance his early hours created to Mrs. Hamlyn, he entered the drawing-room, now cold, silent, deserted, and imperfectly lighted by the single wax-taper he carried in his hand. The air was fragrant with the fine exotics adorning the flower-stands; and the light, dim as it was, of the taper he held, fell upon a thousand gorgeous objects—magnificent vases, marble tables, entablatures of malachite and coral, and all the splendid luxury of *pietra dura* and *marqueterie*.

He seemed to notice, for the first time, the downy softness of the rich Aubusson carpet under his feet; the glitter of the splendid lustres over his head. Like the Cardinal de Richelieu, when discovered by his secretary early one morning a few weeks previous to his decease, taking a solitary leave of the beloved pictures and exquisite statues of his gallery, the eyes of the banker lingered tenderly upon the gaudy objects, for the enjoyment and display of which he had perilled the credit of an honest name, and the peace and welfare of hundreds of confiding victims.

At length, just as he was on the point of receding with noiseless steps from the room over which slept his gentle wife and the happy daughter whose dreams were at that moment roseate with the brightest hues of youthful love, the light he held fell upon the gaudy frame of a large picture, to which, for some years past, his eyes had never once been directed; and, for some minutes, they were now riveted upon it, as by a master-spell.

It was a portrait—a full-length portrait from the pencil of Lawrence, representing Mrs. Hamlyn—no! not Mrs. Hamlyn—*Sophia*, at the climax of her youthful loveliness, a year after her marriage, with her first-born resting on her knee. The picture had been begun at his father's suggestion, while the young bride was yet an idol at Dean Park; the child being added during the slow completion of the portrait, as an after-thought of his own. In himself, one of the loveliest infants ever seen, little Walter derived new beauties from the graceful pencil of the artist; and well did Hamlyn remember how fondly he had assisted in keeping the child quiet during the tedious task of sitting, by holding before his little laughing eyes the very toy which, in the picture before him, figured in the hand of the smiling, exulting mother. The force of association brought back with lifelike force to the banker's mind the soft, warm grasp of those dimpled baby hands. Yet, at that moment, his own were cold as death, and hard with the clench of suppressed emotion!

From the soft and sinuous outline of the half-naked babe, the eyes of Hamlyn wandered to the face of the mother. But could those clustering curls—those sparkling eyes—those blooming cheeks, ever have been the features of his wife? Where was that woman gone? What had become of her? She *could* not have lapsed into the pale, sad, silent, spiritless being who sat by his household board; she *could* not have progressed into the suffering mother who bore her

cross so meekly!—For a moment, Sophia Harrington as he had first beheld her—joyous, brilliant, beautiful, beloved—recurred to his mind; and in reflecting on the transformation his conduct had effected, so heavy a sigh arose from the depths of his soul, that he had ample need to recur anew for consolation to the face of that beloved son, whose mature years fulfilled all the promise of their youthful grace. The passionate joy with which he had hailed the birth of his first-born seemed to have prolonged its influence even until now, with a rapture unsusceptible of decay.

"I should like to have shaken hands again with Walter!" was his closing reflection, as he quitted the room, and slowly ascended the stairs. "In these cases, one never knows what may happen. I should like to have shaken hands first with Walter."

Next morning, it excited no surprise among his servants that their ever-active master should be astir an hour earlier than usual. For a moment, indeed, it struck Ramsay as extraordinary that Mr. Hamlyn should say he did not choose to wait for his cabriolet (which he pretended to have forgotten to order over-night), but that, being in a hurry, he would walk to the nearest coach-stand. Nay, even had the butler surmised that his master was going out to fight a duel, so convinced was he of the propriety and decorum of every measure of Mr. Hamlyn, that he would have felt persuaded some new canon of the law had, unknown to himself, authorized and legalized such a breach of the peace.

Before noon, however, he was suddenly summoned to assist in removing the wounded man to his chamber; and the first to propose sending for Colonel Hamilton, as well as to the sons of his unfortunate master.

Such was the state of affairs when the veteran reached Cavendish Square. The surgeon who had accompanied Hamlyn home in the carriage from Battersea had never left his side, and Keate and Brodie were every moment expected. But neither Mrs. Hamlyn nor his daughter had been yet permitted to see him. From the bewildered looks of the former, Colonel Hamilton saw at once that *she*, at least, entertained no hope; and, having entreated Ellen to remain with her friend in the drawing-room, to which they were sentenced during the examination of the wound, he hurried with anxious but faltering steps to the chamber of the wounded man.

Carefully as he turned the handle of the bedroom door, Hamlyn, who was lying on the bed half undressed, his coat being off, and his shirt stained with blood, was roused by the sound; and, without unclosing his eyes, made the same inquiry which had already three times before escaped his lips, "Is that Walter?"

"Captain Hamlyn was out on a field-day, sir, when John reached the barracks," whispered Ramsay, who, with his usually rubicund face, as pale as death, was supporting his master.

While he was yet speaking, Colonel Hamilton approached the bedside, and gently pressed the hand extended beside the sufferer. Conscious that this tender touch was of a very different nature from the professional handling of the surgeon, Hamlyn slowly unclosed his eyes, and, on recognising the colonel, attempted a faint smile.

"This is sad boy's play for a man of my years," said he, in a feeble voice. "But it was none of my seeking."

Perceiving the surgeon shake his head reprovingly at this attempt to speak on the part of his patient, already exhausted by loss of blood, Colonel Hamilton placed his finger on his lips. Tears were coursing each other down his cheeks. He had seen hundreds—thousands—slain in battle. But it happened that this was the first time he had beheld a man of peace slain by the hand of a fellow-citizen. The instincts of his manly heart shrunk from the sight, as from that of assassination.

"Has Mr. Henry left town?" he inquired, in a low voice, of Ramsay, as Hamlyn again closed his eyes; and the butler's sign in the affirmative proved a sad disappointment. Convinced that Hamlyn was rapidly breathing his last, he thought it hard that neither of his sons should be present to receive his parting instructions, and dying breath.

"So died my poor boys!" was his involuntary reflection. "Neither kith nor kin at hand to close their eyes! But it is cruel indeed upon poor Hamlyn!"

At that moment, a carriage stopped at the door; and though the sound was scarcely noticed by the persons present, the wounded man again, and with still greater effort, renewed his inquiry of, "Is it my son Walter?"

"Since you are anxious, I will go as quick as possible to the barracks, and follow the directions I receive till I find him, and bring him back!" whispered the colonel, bending over him, and, on receiving a grateful word of assent, hastened to quit the room. On the stairs he encountered Keate and a stranger; and having hurriedly acquainted him of the state of the case, returned for a moment into the drawing-room, not, however, to comfort its anxiously-expecting inmates. The expression of his countenance sufficiently apprized them that *he*, at least, was without hope.

"Has any one sent for Harry?" said he to Lydia, perceiving that her mother was incapable of understanding or replying to the question; and, on being answered in the negative, Colonel Hamilton rapidly arranged with his daughter-in-law, that, while he proceeded to Knightsbridge, *she* should despatch Johnston to Dean Park, that the news of the fatal event might be communicated with due reserve to the member of the family least capable of supporting the shock. A few lines from Ellen were to entreat his instant return to town.

"Poor Hamlyn—poor Hamlyn!" murmured Colonel Hamilton, when (after learning at the barracks that, for want of authority, no message had yet been despatched to Wormholt Scrubbs after his master) he took possession of Walter's horse and cab, and authorized the groom to exercise to the utmost the speed of the finest stepper in London. "In the possession of all that renders life desirable! Rich, healthy, happy, active, useful! A quarrel at the House of Commons, they say. Ah! I feared no good would follow those cursed reports I heard t'other day at Launchington's. Maybe, however, they belied him! God grant it! 'Tis hard enough to lose a friend; harder still to lose one's respect for his memory. But how—*how* am I to break this afflicting news to Walter and Dartford?"

The task was, indeed, a trying one. He found them in the animated exercise of their professional duties—those two brilliant and promising young men, and at the first moment, almost inclined to be vexed at his unexpected intrusion

on the ground. Nevertheless, the sight of his fine horse in a foam, and Colonel Hamilton pale and speechless, soon convinced Walter that something was sorely amiss.

In a few seconds, he had taken the groom's place in the cabriolet, and was galloping his horse back to town at a still more frantic rate; while Lord Dartford, though for a moment relieved, even to joy, by learning that the family disaster regarded not the being dearest to him in the world, hastened to obtain from his commanding officer a remission for Walter and himself from their duties of the day, and was soon following them at a distance on his charger, at the utmost speed compatible with the field-day accommodations.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I do but hide

Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning. As its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms, under and over,
So let oblivion hide this grief."—SHELLEY.

By the mercy of Heaven, Walter Hamlyn arrived in Cavendish Square in time to comfort and support his father by his presence during the painful operation of the extraction of the ball, which had been deferred till after the arrival of the second surgeon. Dashing through the crowd assembled as usual at the door, in aggravation of family afflictions, he had scarcely a moment to disencumber himself of his uniform and throw on a dressing-gown, in time to hang over the bed and stifle in his bosom the groans of his father during the agonizing operation, in which it was feared his strength might fail.

But the spell had already taken effect. While preparing himself for the effort, Hamlyn's eyes had encountered the form of his son (Walter, the grandson of old Walter Hamlyn), and feeling he had yet something to live for, something to cherish him, even though exposed to worldly obloquy, he seemed to rally his courage; and the Battersea surgeon, whose finger was continually on his wrist, announced a sensible improvement in the state of the pulse. The simple words, "My dear, dear father!" whispered by the voice of Walter, had conveyed volumes of exhortation and worlds of hope.

By the time the patient was relieved from his agony, and his son from the almost equal torture of witnessing it, by the time the two eminent surgeons had taken leave, leaving the original attendant to watch over the results of the assistance they had rendered, the afternoon was far advanced. At present, it was impossible to surmise the extent of the shock the system of the sufferer might have sustained. But it was much that he was still alive. The evening would show, by the usual accession of fever, how far the constitution was affected. Meanwhile, perfect quiet, and, if possible, sleep, was to be prayed for. Opiates had been already administered—straw was laid down before the house—the knocker removed—the bell muffled, and a policeman stationed at the adjoining door to entreat the forbearance of inquirers. The answer given to their anxious interrogation was the bulletin of the surgeons that "Mr. Hamlyn's situation was precarious; but that he was going on as favourably as could be expected."

These wise precautions had not, however,

prevented a rumour of his death from getting into circulation in the metropolis; and from thence, of course, reaching the provinces, so as to produce a precautionary meeting, on the morrow, of the worthy and independent electors of Barchorpe. The evening papers, nay, even a second edition of one or two morning ones, contained a most detailed and elaborate account of the duel, representing (of course) according to the politics of the divers journals) the banker as a victim, and his antagonist as an assassin; or the challenger as a rash and intemperate man, and the honourable member for Alverstoke as a reluctant self-defender. In both accounts, facts were distorted, descriptions overcharged, and words attributed to both parties which had neither escaped their lips, nor were likely to escape the lips of men in their situation of life; and to one of these penny-a-lineations, in addition to a picturesque description of the mill near which the "fatal meeting" had taken place, a paragraph, headed "LATEST PARTICULARS," announced that "within the last quarter of an hour Mr. Hamlyn had breathed his last;" probably as an excuse for lengthening the paragraph by an account of the maiden name of the amiable and accomplished lady he had left to lament his loss, and the number of children who were the fruit of their union.

While, therefore, Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughters were seated in breathless anxiety in the drawing-room in Cavendish Square, listening every time the slightest movement in the chamber overhead gave indication that the factitious slumbers of the wounded man were broken—while Lord Dartford, to satisfy the anxieties of Lydia, proceeded every quarter of an hour to the bedroom door to ascertain that all was proceeding favourably, and Walter still watching by the bedside—the clubs of the West End were deciding *who* was to fill the vacant seat for Barchorpe; and whether the Honourable Member for Alverstoke and Alberic Vernon would have to surrender, in order to stand their trial, thus producing the loss of a couple of votes to the opposition. Such was the most interesting side of the fatal event to that idle, chattering class of London life, to whom the collision of heaven and earth were important only as affording matter for "news!"

At present, of course, public sympathy rested with Hamlyn. It was quite clear that, whoever might be the aggressor, the dead man was most to be pitied. All who had heard him speak the preceding night, felt privileged to be peculiarly horror-struck. Those who had seen the carriages of Keate and Brodie drive to the door in Cavendish Square, having an anecdote to relate connected with the event of the day, were, for a moment, objects of interest; while even common inquirers after the family who had actually seen the bulletin acquired temporary importance.

It was precisely the sort of incident to set the West End in a ferment, more especially at so unengaged a period of the season. The Hamlyns were, in every way, objects of interest. The approaching marriage of the beautiful daughter, the university distinctions of the gifted son, the popularity of the handsome Walter, were enhancements of the publicity usually connected with a banker and member of Parliament; and the peculiar circumstances connected, and still more peculiar ones *said* to be connected, with Hamlyn's recent conversion to orthodoxy in political economy, served only to add new vigour

to the countless tongues of Rumour already in motion.

By dinner-time, Ffynflam, who had gone the round of the clubs to which he belonged, in order to gather "exclusive information," and "original anecdotes" connected with the duel, for the recreation of a party he was to join at the house of a high legal functionary, found his memory so overcharged with contradictory accounts, all related on "undeniable authority," that it almost required a mnemonic process to convey them so far as the Rolls House, in Chancery Lane. The only point on which the world was unanimous was one always insisted upon when duels prove fatal, namely, that the meeting *ought* to have been prevented, either by the seconds or the police. The quarrel had been public, the provocation generally recognised as sure to provoke a hostile explanation. Every man in London, consequently, decided that all present at the affray ought to be indicted for murder; though, had every man in London been implicated the following day in a similar affair, not one of them would have stirred his little finger in obstruction of a similar result. Nay, had the prudence of the parties suggested an accommodation, nine in ten would afterward have decided that they *ought* to have met; and tried to pick a hole in their character for courage, on the strength of their forbearance.

But while White's and Brookes's were lying and slandering in the levity of their hearts, while eating their oyster *pâtés* and waiting for their cutlets, far deeper mischief was produced in a quarter of the town where reports have a market value, and a fortune is sometimes realized by a dexterous fabrication.

Though the non-appearance of Mr. Hamlyn at the banking-house, at his usual time, had produced no anxiety—thanks to the plausible explanation he had taken the precaution of forwarding to Spilsby—by the middle of the day, tidings reached the city that the body of Hamlyn the banker had been brought home to his house in Cavendish Square; some said by a policeman, others, by a surgeon who had vainly attempted to restore animation to the corpse. To this positive announcement succeeded a rumour, arising as rumours do—none can tell how—connecting the event with the fatal word *Suicide*! It was reported on Change that the unfortunate canker had perished by his own hand; and whereas, in the city, one only cause suggests itself to sicken a man of life—*viz.*, a scarcity of money—though it could not be added to the report (as is usual in such cases) that the policeman had found only a few halfpence in the waistcoat-pocket of the self-murderer—it was confidently stated that the rash act of the banker was produced by the hopeless derangement of his affairs!

It was, luckily, past three o'clock before this fatal tale got wind; for within a few minutes afterward, the doors in Lombard-street were besieged by a far denser crowd of claimants than those in Cavendish Square of obliging inquirers. The answer of the clerks to such as pressed for particulars of Mr. Hamlyn's death "was, that they had received a communication from him some hours before, in his own handwriting; and that the messenger they had despatched for information to the West End half an hour before was not yet returned." Their answer to those who pressed for the payment of their balance was prompt compliance; and it was fortunate

that the remittance that very morning of the debt of Schreiber and Co. placed them out of any immediate anxiety from the absence of their principal during a run upon the house.

Before Spilsby had found time to become really alarmed, the usual hour for closing arrived, and the last thing done to appease the anxiety of those who were hurrying too late to the door was to exhibit a bulletin, stating that Mr. Hamlyn had been wounded in a duel arising out of differences the preceding night in the House of Commons, but was going on as favourably as possible.

But though this authorized contradiction of the report of his death had all the good effect anticipated by Spilsby, the deviser of the measure, it was impossible to say what sort of feeling, or even what sort of contingencies, might arise next morning previous to opening the bank. At all events, the head-clerk, to whom the private business of the house was so inadequately known, did not choose to take upon himself any farther responsibility; and he accordingly despatched an express to Mr. Bernard Hamlyn, who was at his seat in Suffolk, unluckily out of the line of railroad communication; and as soon as the correspondence of the house was closed for the evening, and, in the absence of the acting partner, the keys delivered to himself, he proceeded to Cavendish Square, to ascertain the exact state of Mr. Hamlyn, and take the instructions of his representatives.

But this was no easy matter. In the first instance, he was denied access to the house, orders to prevent all disturbance or noise having been strictly issued. But the John to whom he had applied for admittance to Mr. Hamlyn the preceding week having luckily recognised his person, prevented his dismissal by the police, and ensured his ingress. Once within the hall, all seemed secure! But to whom was he now to address himself? One of Mr. Hamlyn's sons was in the country—the other in close attendance on the dying man! Even Ramsay had not a moment quitted the sick room since the operation. With respect to the banker's wife and daughters, even if the footman could have been prevailed upon to disturb them, of what avail their interference?

By good luck, the footman with whom the clerk was in communication was not only gratefully attached to his master, but by frequent attendance on Mr. Hamlyn to the House, and gossiping with the servants of other men of business, had imbibed some notion of the consequence of a banker's calling. He perfectly understood his master's life to be of more consequence to the community than that of a Lord Edward Sutton; and, having allowed Spilsby to station himself in the dining-room, promised to acquaint him the moment an interview was possible with Captain Hamlyn or the Marquis of Dartford!

"Colonel Hamilton has only this moment left the house!" said John; "'tis a thousand pities but you had spoken with Colonel Hamilton!" an opinion in which Spilsby so strongly coincided, that when, half an hour afterward, the good old man hurried back again (having been home only to make inquiries concerning Johnston's departure or arrival, and give orders in behalf of Ellen, who would not, even for a moment, leave Mrs. Hamlyn), before he made his appearance in the drawing-room, an interview was claimed by the clerk.

"Keate saw poor Hamlyn an hour ago, and decides him to be going on as favourably as possible!" said Colonel Hamilton, concluding that the anxiety depicted on the face of the bald-headed clerk proceeded solely from the suffering and precarious condition of his employer.

"I am heartily glad to hear it, sir!" replied Spilsby. "Mr. Hamlyn has been a good friend to me, and has my best wishes for his recovery. But I am exceedingly anxious, in the interim, to receive instructions from the family. The responsibility of so considerable a business as Mr. Hamlyn's must not be left upon my hands. I scarcely occupy even a confidential situation in the firm, and am quite at a loss."

"Not more so, I take it, than either of his sons would be!" cried the colonel, shrugging his shoulders. "By George! poor Hamlyn was right! It was essential that one of those boys should be prepared to succeed him in his business. But who could foresee all that has happened?"

"The fatal event of this morning, sir," resumed Spilsby, "has occasioned a most unexpected run upon the house. In the interval before opening to-morrow, confidence may be in some degree restored by the discovery that the report of Mr. Hamlyn's suicide was a libel—and even of his death, premature. But it is impossible to guess! A run upon a banking-house, once begun, proceeds like the conflagration of a house, as if stimulated by every new attempt to arrest its progress. I own I tremble for the result!"

"Tremble for the result of *what*?" cried the colonel—fancying that, in the house of death, no interest could prevail over that of the danger of the sufferer. "Why can't you speak plain—and speak out?"

"I mean, sir," resumed Spilsby, scarcely knowing whether he dared consider the colonel in any other light than an important constituent, to be alarmed by the announcement, "I mean that, should the pressure continue, we are unprepared to meet it without advice or assistance from one of the partners."

"What! forced to suspend your payments?" exclaimed the astonished old man. "Gad! this must be looked to immediately! This is a disastrous consequence of poor Hamlyn's disablement which I own I had not thought of! I'm expecting young Hamlyn (my friend's second son—the one who's intended for the firm) in town every minute. I'll confer with him. If possible, I'll take an opportunity of asking a word of instruction, in the course of the night, from Hamlyn himself. At what o'clock do you open?"

"At nine, sir."

"Can you be here at seven?"

"Certainly. But if I could possibly receive your instructions to-night—"

"Come back, then, at twelve!" said Colonel Hamilton. "By that time I shall have seen Harry Hamlyn, and taken his opinion on the matter."

But when midnight and the baldheaded clerk arrived together, no progress had been made—no Henry Hamlyn been heard of! On reaching Rugby, Johnston had ascertained from Jacob Durdan, who was waiting for the up-train and had been at Dean Park in the morning for tidings of the family, that Mr. Henry was neither there, nor expected; and at the station, where Henry Hamlyn's person was well known, it was stated that he had not returned from his visit to town. To save time, therefore, instead of cut-

ting across the country to Ovington, at the loss of several hours, Johnston returned straight to London, bringing back the unopened letter of Mrs. Hamilton.

This was sore news to the colonel—astounding news to the clerk!

"I'm so poor a hand at business," said the former to Spilsby, "that I scarcely know how to advise, without the risk of doing mischief. But since matters are serious as you say, I recommend you to call together the friends of the house. Hamlyn's solicitors, Wigwell and Slack.—Mrs. Hamlyn's brothers, the two Harringtons (they're no great friends, I fancy, with her husband; but as her trustees, they're forced to look to their sister's interests)—besides any business friends, of whom you've more cognizance than I have, should meet at the banking-house by daybreak to-morrow. I will be there myself, as the friend of the boys; and, late as it is, those gentlemen should be apprized to-night. The matter is too momentous to be trifled with!"

"I will hurry down instantly, sir, to Wigwell," said the clerk, who had a cab in waiting. "He keeps early hours, and will be retired to rest. But, luckily, he lives at his house of business; and I can leave a note, appraising him of your desire. I will also proceed to Mr. Andrew Harrington's, in Bedford Square, who is somewhere about the best adviser in London we could have in such a strait, besides being one of our largest capitalists. If you can oblige me with writing materials, Colonel Hamilton, I will provide myself *here* with a letter to Wigwell and Slack, in case I am unable to see one of the partners to-night."

This important business despatched, and with it the clerk whose communications had added such thorny anxieties to the previous calamity, Colonel Hamilton returned to Mrs. Hamlyn and the family, from whom he was careful to conceal the name of the visitor to whom he had been called away; and after entering kindly into the dismay produced by Harry's non-appearance, and the lamentations of the poor mother that the dreadful news must now reach him abruptly, wherever he might happen to be, the dispirited old man persuaded her to adjourn to her chamber, watched over by Ellen, and insisted that her daughters should retire to bed. As a pretext for driving them to repose, he stated his desire to take a few hours' rest on the drawing-room sofa; Walter Hamlyn having resolutely declined his offer of sharing his vigils beside the wounded man, who was passing a far better night than had been hoped or predicted.

By these arrangements, Colonel Hamilton was soon left alone in that selfsame gorgeous apartment, of which Hamlyn himself had been the sole occupant at that hour the preceding night. But in how different a frame of mind, and with what opposite intentions! The banker had been steeling his mind for a barbarous purpose and unchristian encounter—the old man was devising projects of mercy and peace! The banker had recoiled with horror from reminiscences of a life of impotence and hardness of heart; the old man attempted to compose his fluttered spirits by reflections full of tenderness and love! The banker had attempted to nerve his courage for impending dangers by reliance on his usual good luck, and the false energy produced by that systematic deference to the opinion of the world which had often enabled him to work miracles for the redemption of his

character; the old man reclined his head humbly on his bosom, and recommended himself and those who were dear to him to the mercy and providence of God!

"In this very room," was the last reflection that soothed his aching heart, and smoothed his troubled eyelids to rest, "did my poor boys often spend a cheerful holiday! Here they used to think of their poor old father, and the home they were never to see again. And, with the aid of the Almighty, I will do a father's part by the children of the unfortunate man who is groaning in his bed yonder, on whom the Lord have pity!"

He slept!—a sleep how different from that of the feverish sufferer above! But, he had not been more than three hours lost in slumber, when he was startled by a cold hand placed upon his own.

"What the deuce! have I overslept myself?" cried he, starting from the sofa, in the belief that Johnston, whom he had forewarned for the purpose, was come to call him. But though all was dark in the room, save where the cold dim light of a spring twilight struggled through the chinks of the window-shutters and muslin curtains (the draperies having been left undrawn in the confusion of the night before), he speedily saw that the person by whom his hand was so eagerly grasped was no servant; and a few wild-words of explanation soon apprized him that the fatal papers having reached Cambridge at night with the rumour of his father's death, Harry Hamlyn, who had only reinstated himself at Trinity a few hours before, had instantly got into a postchaise and hurried to town.

"I was afraid I should be too late—oh, how afraid I should be too late!" faltered he, opening his whole heart to the man with whom he had not yet exchanged fifty words, but whom he interpreted by his acts into everything that was just, generous, and humane. "And what would have become of me, had I not arrived in time? It was more essential for me than for the rest to receive his last blessing—for I am the only one of his children who ever crossed him! Are you aware that he once cursed me? He, my poor father! And to think that he might have died without a word of forgiveness!"

Tears burst from the eyes of the distracted young man, as, with clasped hands and heaving bosom, he uttered those incoherent words. "But he is better!" continued he, struggling to recover himself. "He has passed a good night. He has enjoyed some hours' sleep. I have just left Walter. I have even knelt, unseen, by the bedside of my father, who must not be disturbed. But, before relieving my brother from his watch, that he also may take some rest, I could not help coming to thank you, sir, for being here—you and her! It is so like you both! God bless you—God bless you!"

All this time Colonel Hamilton was striving to compose his thoughts, and resume the chain of his over-night considerations. It seemed grievous to molest the harassed and delicate young man before him, weary with a night's travelling as well as distracted by a night's anguish, with mere words of business—to arrest the warm current of his filial feelings by dry obstacles of worldly solicitude. But it was indispensable. The interests of too many human beings were dependant on the event. In a few words, therefore, as possible, Colonel Hamilton explained to Henry the critical position of his

father's affairs, and the vital necessity that palliative measures should be adopted without delay.

To his great surprise, very little emotion was produced by the terrible announcement. Either Harry was strangely ignorant of the magnitude of the transactions in which his father's house was engaged, or the blow by which he had been previously smitten had actually stunned him. So completely, indeed, did he appear bewildered, and so thoroughly absorbed by the idea of his father's danger, that Colonel Hamilton judged it his duty to touch upon two strings, which, in the first instance, he had with scrupulous delicacy avoided. He spoke of the future welfare of his mother and sisters as at stake—he spoke of the dishonour likely to fall upon the name of his father!

"Let us go, then!" exclaimed Harry. "There is not a moment to be lost! Let us hasten into the city." And after attempting in vain to reduce his disordered dress and haggard looks to an air of propriety, he kept hurrying Colonel Hamilton to his father's dressing-room, adjoining the study below, where breakfast was set out; and each drank a cup of tea standing, ere they proceeded into the city in a hackney-coach.

The streets were nearly empty. The shops, slowly unclosing their windows as they approached the more commercial quarter of the town, began to restore an air of life and decency to the streets, paraded an hour before only by the outcasts of the metropolis, and the police stationed there for their coercion; and by the time they reached Lombard-street, though the clock of St. Sepulchre's had not yet struck seven, the shop-boys of the city were busily engaged in making the pavements impassable with their irrigations.

On the hackney-coach drawing up, the door was partly unclosed to admit them by the old porter of the counting-house, who appeared to have been posted there in expectation; and as they passed onward into the private room where Spilsby now reigned supreme, the old man plucked young Hamlyn by the sleeve to inquire after his poor master. It would have been a comfort to Harry, had his own heart been less full, to perceive that this venerable servitor had tears in his eyes.

Though they were before their time, with the punctuality so highly lauded by the old soldier, the clerks, the Harringtons, the solicitors, and two strangers (one of whom was introduced to Colonel Hamilton as the stock-broker charged with the business of the house), were already assembled, with the books open on the table before them, and their lengthened countenances bearing ominous testimony to the unsatisfactory nature of the examination. Even the intelligence brought by the new-comers, that Mr. Hamlyn had passed a good night, and was going on as well as possible, did little towards unbending the brows of the gloomy synod.

No one seemed anxious to be the first to speak, seeing that every word uttered must be an accusation against the acting partner of the house, in his own absence, and in the presence of his son. But had any spectator, personally uninterested in the scene, been present, he could scarcely have failed to observe, that the deference habitually testified towards Hamlyn and Co., by Wigwell and Slack, was already transferred to Colonel Hamilton, the Dives of the party.

"I am extremely sorry to say, sir," observed Spilsby, after due salutation to Henry Hamlyn and his venerable companion, "that matters here wear a still more unpromising aspect than I represented to you last night. Various securities on which I had counted as of an available nature are unaccountably missing; and, though I have no doubt that Mr. Hamlyn, on his restoration to health, will be able to enlighten us as to his manner of disposing of them, at present we are wholly in the dark. From indications afforded me by Mr. Andrew Harrington and his brother, I have reason to fear that the run upon the house will continue unabated; and that the cruel report of Mr. Hamlyn's death by his own hand, having reached our country correspondents last night, the post will bring in heavy demands. Mr. Bernard Hamlyn has not yet arrived in town, and I have only twenty thousand pounds and a fraction to open with this morning."

At this announcement, the two solicitors looked at each other with an air of blank amazement; the two uncles upon Henry, with a gaze of mournful compassion; while the stockbroker and his companion elevated their eyebrows, and muttered something unintelligible to the heads of their canes.

"In which case, to open at all were an act of insanity!" observed Andrew Harrington, in a decided tone. "But it is impossible that such a business as this should be so utterly unprovided with resources!"

"Mr. Hamlyn managed the concern in his own way, sir, admitting no person wholly into his confidence," replied Spilsby. "Till Mr. Bernard Hamlyn shall arrive, I am prepared to say nothing."

"And if he don't arrive, then the house must stop payment?" demanded Colonel Hamilton, coming abruptly to the point.

A distressing silence afforded the only reply to this direct apostrophe.

"God bless my soul! Can *nothing* be done?" cried the colonel. "Surely poor Hamlyn, who has so many friends, and acted so liberally to all the world, is not to be molested and disgraced on his deathbed, for want of a moneyed man or two willing to come forward in his behalf? You, sir!" continued he, turning towards Andrew Harrington, "you, sir, who are so near a connexion of the family, surely you will do the part of a kinsman by this unfortunate man?"

"I will do the part of a brother by his unfortunate wife, and her children shall be to me as my own," was the stern reply of the uncompromising London merchant. "But if the risk of half a crown of mine would keep Richard Hamlyn out of the Gazette, I do not scruple to say that I would not put it down. I speak for brother and self. We are here as trustees for the wife and children. Excuse me, Harry! You are not in a state to judge of my motives. But that I respect your filial feelings, my dear nephew, I would say more."

Messrs. Wigwell and Slack, perceiving by the countenance of Colonel Hamilton that he was disposed to resent this churlishness on the part of Mrs. Hamlyn's wealthy brothers, fancied they were serving their own cause, if not their client's, in endeavouring to shake the resolution of Harrington Brothers, by representing the pressure on Hamlyn's house to be temporary and accidental; and that, with a little assistance from without, he firm would be able not only to weather the

storm, but take its stand with additional credit from this demonstration of strength in the moneyed world. But, even after this appeal, the brothers-in-law and stockbroker remained mute as fishes. It was clear that they, at least, thought otherwise.

"Meanwhile," cried Henry Hamlyn, suddenly withdrawing the clasped hands with which he had concealed his face, "nothing is done—and my father's credit is at stake, the fruit of twenty years' undeviating integrity and unwearyed labour! He must not only die in the prime of life, but die humiliated and disgraced!"

Andrew Harrington uttered not a syllable; but his brother Thomas was troubled with a short, dry cough, which appeared of evil omen to the anxious Spilsby, whose hope of assistance from what were called the friends of the house was becoming gradually extinguished.

"Were there time to call around us my father's friends and colleagues," persisted Harry; "or had I only a dozen hours before me, I should feel safe. But if those on whom we have the claims of blood—"

"I tell ye what!" interrupted Colonel Hamilton, laying his hand graspingly on Harry's arm to forestall words of fruitless exasperation, but himself addressing the party assembled round the table; "I am myself nowise akin to Richard Hamlyn, and no otherwise interested in his welfare than as from friend to friend. But in my view, that's a holier bond than many folks are disposed to admit; and so, I'm willing to stand the gist of what others are startled at. I've a matter of about two hundred thousand pounds, say two hundred thousand, in various securities lodged with the house, most of them tangible; and all I can say is, that the firm is perfectly at liberty to convert as much of them into money for its own purposes as will carry it safely through the storm."

A murmur of gratitude and admiration burst from the solicitors, stockbrokers, and clerk, wholly indifferent to Colonel Hamilton; who had his ample reward in the silent pressure of the hand bestowed upon him by his own and Ellen's young friend, Harry. But he could not but notice, at the same time, that Andrew Harrington and his brother regarded him with a look of the same contemptuous pity they would have bestowed upon a patient escaped from a lunatic asylum.

"We must lose no time," said the stockbroker, looking at his watch—we have brought it to half past seven! I shall be extremely happy to accommodate the firm with twenty thousand, on the responsibility and receipt of Colonel Hamilton, as I fear there would be no time for the realization of the securities to which he alludes—"

"Or if deposited with me," said the other friend of the house, who proved to be an extensive Russia merchant, under considerable obligations to the house of Hamlyn and Co., "I shall be happy to advance their full amount."

"You allude, I conclude, sir," said Spilsby, whose countenance ever since the hostile declarations of the two Harringtons had been subsiding from pale to paler, "to the sum of £88,742 and a fraction, standing in the 3 per cent. consols, in the joint names of yourself and Mr. Hamlyn?"

"To that—to my Long Annuities—India Bonds—and other matters. But I suppose the money in the funds is most come-at-able!" said

the colonel. "This gentleman I understand to be the broker of the firm? Let him conclude the sale, bring me the necessary papers, and I will sign them before I leave the house."

And while Wigwell and Slack proceeded to murmur all the best-sounding nouns in their vocabulary nearest related to the cardinal virtues, such as "liberality—generosity—disinterestedness—nobleness—magnanimity—friendship—worth"—Spilsby busied himself, or affected to busy himself, with careful examination of a folio marked in white on a red ground with a stupendous H—; and a variety of day-books, stock-receipts, and miscellaneous papers, that seemed to bear reference to Colonel Hamilton's account with the house. At length, after prodigious rustlings and shufflings, and opening and shutting of tin boxes, the baldheaded clerk summoned the stockbroker into a corner, and commenced a whispered dialogue, which one or two of those present seemed inclined to resent as a lapse of confidence. It did not, however, last long. With a face of ashy paleness and quivering lips, Spilsby returned to the table which the others had not quitted; and, after muttering an unintelligible preamble concerning his own regrets and horror on the occasion, stated that he had reason to believe the stock in question was not forthcoming; that his friend Mr. Slicem, to whom he had just referred, perfectly well remembered having at divers times disposed for Mr. Hamlyn of large portions of the stock in question, which, at the last sale, had dwindled to a few thousands.

"And yet, strange and melancholy to say," pursued the clerk, "no entry of these sales appears to have been carried to Colonel Hamilton's account!"

"I feared as much!" was the whispered ejaculation of Andrew Harrington to his brother.

"I had, perhaps, better take this opportunity of stating," resumed Spilsby with blanched lips, "that the course of examination into the private accounts of the firm in which I have passed the night, gives me reason to fear that other securities of a similar nature will prove deficient."

"Sell my stock!—dispose of my property?" murmured Colonel Hamilton. "Well, 'tis my own fault! I gave him free leave."

"The sooner this question is cleared up, the better!" cried Andrew Harrington. "In half an hour, either this house must open, or suspend its payments. The point of embezzlement or non-embezzlement had best be premonitorily cleared up. Mr. Spilsby can ascertain from Colonel Hamilton's account the nature of the securities which ought, in his instance, to be in deposit. If missing—"

The baldheaded clerk interrupted the somewhat severe schooling of Mr. Harrington, by addressing in a low voice to Colonel Hamilton a succession of inquiries to which answers were returned aloud by the veteran, with irrepressible exclamations of surprise.

"Gone?" cried he. "The India Bonds sold? The Spanish too? In short, I am to look on myself as a ruined man!"

Spilsby had not courage to meet the eyes of the old soldier; still less, to utter a syllable in reply.

"Well, well!" cried he. "At all events, Moonjee's remittances are at present on the high seas. Thanks be to Providence, I may still find butter to my bread! And to think that

the friend in whom I confided as in my Maker should have done this! The Lord forgive him! But the unfortunate fellow, is at least making heavy atonement!"

The stockbroker, who, at Spilsby's suggestion, had hurried home to his office in Birchlin Lane to consult his books respecting the transactions in question, now reappeared, breathless and agitated, with confirmation of their worst suspicions, as well as of others privately communicated to him by Spilsby.

"There's a terrible press without, awaiting the opening of the doors," said he. "I had nearly my coat torn off by people applying to me for information, as to one connected with the business of the house. All I could say at all satisfactory was, that there appeared every probability of Hamlyn's recovery. But, it was not *that* they cared for!"

"I see no use in attempting to keep up the farce!" said Andrew Harrington, in a determined voice. "My nephew having left the room, poor fellow, I state at once my opinion, that to open the house for the despatch of business is wholly out of the question. It is impossible to surmise to what amount the credit of Hamlyn may be compromised. The fact is, that the firm was involved at the old man's death. Ever since, instead of retrieving himself by self-denial and economy, Richard Hamlyn has been plunging deeper and deeper into the mire, and attempting to cut through the knot of his difficulties by mad and unjustifiable speculations. My remonstrances on the subject produced entity between us; and Heaven knows it is no satisfaction to me that all my predictions concerning my unfortunate sister's family have so speedily come to pass!"

No one interrupted him. Colonel Hamilton was gone in search of Harry, whom he found exhausted by anguish of mind, ensuing on want of rest and nourishment, half fainting on one of the chests in the computing-house. The solicitors were consulting together in what shape to ensure priority of payment to their claims upon the firm; and it was only the stockbroker and Russia merchant who remained with Spilsby to coincide in the decision of the Harringtons, that circulars should be instantly printed, announcing the temporary closing of the house of Hamlyn and Co., on account of the precarious condition of the acting partner and the absence of the junior!

Mr. Slicem undertook to have this form, which was hastily drawn up by Spilsby under Andrew Harrington's directions, conveyed to the parties who undertake the printing and dissemination of such documents. But, as he quitted the house, and attempted to make his way down the door-steps, which were as densely crowded as the entrance to a theatre previous to opening the doors, a carriage and four dashed along the street, and drew up as near the door as the gathering of the mob would allow.

The crest upon the travelling-carriage was noticed. In a moment, it was whispered, and in the next, positively known, that the hasty traveller was no other than the junior partner of Hamlyn's firm; and, as it opportunely occurred to the stockbroker that his arrival might produce some modification in the paper he carried in his pocket, he applied to the policeman previously keeping order in that tumultuous assemblage to facilitate his passage through the crowd.

When, therefore, Bernard Hamlyn, an en-

feeble, fractious invalid, was assisted out of his carriage by a stout, burly individual, whom some concluded to be his valet de chambre, and some, with more truth, his country attorney (but who at present looked exceedingly like his keeper), he was conveyed into the banking-house between two policemen, giving him very much the air of a delinquent in custody, greatly to the increase of his natural nervousness and incompetency.

Bernard Hamlyn was a meager, feeble, undersized man, having hair and eyelashes the colour and texture of silk, and a voice like a broken pan-pipe.

"I received your letter by express late last night, gentlemen," said he, fretfully addressing the persons he found assembled in the private room; "why you have summoned me here I cannot guess. I am very unequal to the execution of such a journey—very unequal indeed. It is well known that I have never interfered in the concerns of this house—that I am very unequal to business—very unequal indeed! All I have to ask, therefore, is that you will communicate your wishes as speedily as possible to this gentleman, my legal adviser, who will act in concert with you—to which effort I am very unequal—very unequal indeed!"

From this preamble, it was pretty clear that the junior partner brought no accession of counsel to the consultation; and it was soon equally apparent that the means of the selfish hypochondriac were as shallow as his wit. His whole fortune was embarked in the firm; and the country attorney, his esquire of the body (if he possessed a body), who evidently came prepared to bluster and protect the egotism of his employer from molestation and his fortune from risk, was soon compelled to knock under, and announce to Bernard Hamlyn, on the showing of his shrewder brother lawyers, Wigwell and Slack, that he was nearer a fiat of bankruptcy in reality than he fancied himself to be to his grave.

"It is very hard that I should be routed out of my quiet country retirement to listen to such harassing details as these!" faltered the man, who had hitherto conceived the business of a banker to consist in receiving quarterly an income of six thousand a year. "I am very unequal to such a shock—very unequal indeed. I am a sad invalid—a very sad invalid. My medical attendant assured me that this hurried journey might have a most serious effect upon a man in my state of health."

But no one gave ear to his peevish grumblings; not even the burly attorney. Each man present was intent upon his own grievous share in the calamity, against which there was no farther hope of succour. Each was calculating the amount of his impending losses; with the exception of Colonel Hamilton, who exerted himself to remove the still half insensible Henry from the spot, ere the posting of the placard should announce the closing of the house.

The poor old porter was sobbing helpless behind the door as they passed. The aspect of the despairing countenances and ferocious eyes that met Colonel Hamilton's view in the throng without, as the policeman assisted them into their hackney-coach, had not faded from his recollection even when, after a slow return towards the West End, they reached the inauspicious purlieus of Cavendish Square.

On entering the coach, the old man had taken

the arm of the unresisting Henry under his, and kept his hand fondly clasped within his own, till they approached together the "house no more his home." Not a token of consciousness or recognition escaped the heart-broken young man! Colonel Hamilton was forced to assist him from the coach, as he would have assisted the helplessness of a child.

So thoroughly absorbed was he, indeed, by the alarming state of exhaustion of his young friend, and so bewildered by the exciting scenes which had been passing before his eyes, that he took no note of the aspect of the servants who met him on the door-steps. Even when Johnston addressed him in the hall, the deplorable condition of the fine young fellow leaning upon his arm was more to the colonel than any tidings he could have to learn of improvement in the wounded man.

He led him into the study, as though the house were his own and poor Harry a visitor, and placed him silently on the sofa. At that moment, Mrs. Hamilton, who had been watching anxiously for their arrival, in the earnestness of her desire to see them ere they went up stairs, hurried into the room.

On perceiving Colonel Hamilton leaning over the half fainting Henry, she beckoned him towards her, and would fain have spoken. But the kind old soul, whose eyes were obscured by gathering tears, forestalled the question he fancied her about to ask.

"Yes! all is over, Nelly!" said he. "The house has stopped payment. Go to him! Say a kind word to him. The poor fellow has no longer a guinea in the world—"

Ere he could add another syllable, Ellen was beside the scarcely conscious young man—taking his hands into hers, pressing them to her lips, her eyes, rather with the wild tenderness of a mother who finds a lost child restored to her, than the shamefacedness of a mistress or sober affection of a wife.

"Mine forever!" whispered she, with streaming eyes, as she pressed him to her heart. "Ours forever!" she repeated, turning towards Colonel Hamilton, who had advanced towards them, and was contemplating with deep feeling the fervent nature betrayed at such a moment by the woman he had always seen so cold, so haughty, so reserved.

Taking their united hands in his, the old man murmured a fervent blessing on their heads. And then, for the first time since he became aware of the family dishonour, the tears of Henry Hamlyn burst forth.

Alas! he knew not yet one half his cause for sorrow! The motive of Ellen's impatience to meet them by the way was only to soften by due preparation the announcement of a new calamity.

During their absence in the city, Mr. Hamlyn had breathed his last!

CHAPTER XXIV.

"My youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length
By varied pleasures—sweetened in the mixture,
But tragical in the issue. Beauty, pomp,
With every sensuality our giddiness
Doth frame an idol, are inconstant friends
When any troubled passion makes us halt
On the unguarded castle of the mind."—FORD.

As the unnatural composure produced by the administration of strong opiates subsided, the

wounded man had exhibited symptoms of restlessness and irritability which produced considerable alarm in the mind of his attendant. Within half an hour of Colonel Hamilton's departure for the city, he had judged it necessary to send for the eminent surgeons to whose higher judgment his patient had been intrusted.

Scarcely was this precautionary measure taken, when Hamlyn himself seemed conscious of a change. His eyes kept wandering round, as if in search of some unseen object; and when told, on inquiring for Walter, that his son was dozing on the sofa, at the foot of his bed, he suddenly asked for Henry. With the sort of clairvoyance that appears to invest somnambulists and dying persons, he seemed to have become inexplicably aware of Harry's arrival in town during the night.

The reply of Ramsay, though expressly intended to restore his master to composure, was, unluckily, calculated only to stimulate the fever of his frame.

"Mr. Henry and Colonel Hamilton are gone to Lombard-street, sir!" said the butler, in his usual deferential tone.

"The head-clerk was here late last night; and the colonel desired he might be called at seven, to be at the banking-house before opening time."

A sudden shivering fit seemed to pervade the frame of his unfortunate master at this intelligence.

"They are gone? You are quite sure that they are gone, at the summons of Spilsby?" said he, in an unnatural hoarse voice.

"Quite sure, sir! Mr. Henry spent half an hour by your bedside in the night; and very much afflicted and broken he looked, when he stepped into the coach with Colonel Hamilton."

A moan escaped the lips of the banker, as his head sunk back upon the pillow on hearing these words; and when Ramsay bent over him to hold the usual restoratives to his nostrils, he saw that a cold dew was rising on the livid face.

"Call Walter!" said his master, faintly.

"Captain Hamlyn is still asleep," replied Ramsay, remembering his master's former anxious injunction that his son should on no account be disturbed.

"Call him—or it will be too late!" persisted Mr. Hamlyn; and in another moment, poor Walter, roused from one of those dreams of love and peace with which some evil influence seems to delight in mocking the anguish of the unhappy—the condemned felon in his cell—the exile in his banishment—was standing beside the bed of death.

"Nearer!" said Mr. Hamlyn, as the young man, still imperfectly awakened, stood bewildered at his side.

"Stoop down to me, Walter! Listen to me, my son! I am going where there must be an end to human love!" faltered the dying man, contemplating with fixed and glazing eyes the fine face now bending over him in unspeakable anguish. "Walter! do not curse me when I am gone! I have loved you very dearly! Do not think too hardly of your poor father!"

"My dearest, dearest father, let me call for help!" exclaimed his son, perceiving that his end was indeed drawing near. "Surely you will see my mother—my sisters? There is yet time, if you desire spiritual consolation—"

"I desire only *you*!" replied the dying man. "It is too late for repentance, Walter—too late even for explanation. But the grave covers all!

My life has been a mistake—beginning in error, ending in crime! My father was a spendthrift. He left me only a ruined business—an embarrassed estate! I loved him living—I loved his memory—I tried to preserve it from shame, even at the expense of— Walter! when you hear me condemned—think leniently of one who adored *you* even as he had adored his father! Think leniently of me. Protect your mother—the best, the most exemplary of women. Do your utmost to conceal from the world the disordered state of the banking-house. But above—above all—think—think *leniently* of—"

His utterance became more and more impeded. Yet, by a sudden effort, as if roused by the tears that fell profusely from the eyes of Captain Hamlyn, he put forth his hand, already cold with the approach of death, and, drawing down the face of his son towards him, imprinted a fervent kiss—the first since childhood—upon his lips!

As he relinquished his hold, his head fell back heavily on the pillow, his eyes fixed eagerly and searchingly upon those of Captain Hamlyn, and were never afterward withdrawn. In a moment a strange, gurgling sound was audible in his throat. Blood, mingled with foam, burst from his lips; and though his eyes still remained riveted on those of his son, there was no longer meaning in their glassy gaze. Already they were fixed in death!

Before the arrival of the surgeons, who had been sent for, all was over; and their countenances in quitting the house forestalled the necessity for announcement to those without of the fatal event. The afflicting news had been cautiously revealed to Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughters by Mrs. Hamilton, previous to the colonel's arrival; and while Ellen was lavishing her gentle words and endearments upon Henry, Walter was striving to support the courage of his mother sufficiently to enable her to enter the chamber of death, to which she proposed to accompany the poor girls, who yearned to look for the last time upon their father's face.

A similar feeling soon suggested itself to poor Harry, even amid the consolations so precious to his heart; and Colonel Hamilton lent him his arm to the door of the room, but forbore to enter, feeling that, at so sacred a moment, the kindred of the dead ought to be alone with their dead.

When Henry entered, the three broken-hearted women were on their knees in prayer around the bed. Walter was standing beside his mother, with his tearful eyes fixed like hers upon the now powerless form and passionless face, instinct but a few hours before with vigour, intellect, command; and the moment the door opened, the two brothers, thus meeting for the first time since their calamity, rushed instinctively into each other's arms, and clung to each other weeping, as if tacitly expressing a pledge and promise of strengthened fraternal love. Neither of them had, at that moment, a thought or care that was not comprised in the senseless form before them, and the sorrowing women at their feet. Worldly poverty and worldly shame were mere words to their ear, in the presence of their dead father; and while all London was ringing with the ruin and wretchedness of the Hamlyns, they were united in that little chamber, taking no thought of silver or gold, and willing to squander the wealth of the world, had it been placed at their disposal, to restore animation to

him who lay extended on that bloodstained bed—the victim of one of those privileged assassinations authorized by the customs of the civilized world.

Nevertheless, it was the sight of those helpless sisters and mother that served to restore to poor Henry a sense of their terrible situation. It was necessary his mother should be warned—it was indispensable his brother should be apprized, that they were penniless and disgraced, as well as bereft of husband and father. To himself, at present, the worst part of the evil was fortunately unknown. He still believed the firm to have sunk under the pressure of sudden and undeserved difficulties; and in communicating the fatal tidings to Walter, repeated, again and again, "Thank Heaven, he was spared the knowledge of what has happened! A man of his strict integrity and nice sense of honour would have died in agony indeed, if aware of the discredit about to attach itself to his name!"

The two young men were, fortunately, relieved from the painful duty of informing their beloved mother of the unsuspected aggravation of her misfortunes. The instant her brothers became aware of the event which had taken place in Cavendish Square, both hastened to her side, with entreaties that she would quit the house with her family, and accept a home with either. But of this removal she would not hear. So long as the breathless form of their father remained there, she felt it to be the abiding-place of her children; and on her expressing this feeling firmly and strongly, Mr. Harrington, with as much delicacy as was consistent with his straightforward habits of life, apprized her of the doubly melancholy position in which they were placed.

That instant she desired to be left alone with her brothers. She did not choose that her innocent girls, still less that her noble-minded sons, should hear the terrible question she was about to ask, and to ask with fear and trembling, under the roof still sheltering the worthless clay of him who was gone to his dread account. The house had stopped payment; it was a misfortune—but she and hers could work—she and hers could wait. All she desired to know was whether that misfortune were connected with crime! Hamlyn and Co. were insolvents, bankrupts, ruined, lost; but—she had not courage, in the end, to pronounce the fatal question!

But her compassionate brother understood her; and attempted, as best he might, to soften the blow he was compelled to deal in narrating the startling discoveries which had taken place. As if such griefs were to be palliated! Say what he might, the fact was before her in all its damning atrocity. She knew all that the honest man before her must be feeling; or, rather, she knew it not, for the moment she fully understood that knavery of the blackest kind was attributed to the father of her children, she sank into utter insensibility, securing her from farther anguish.

In this state she was resigned by her sympathizing brother to the care of Mrs. Hamilton, who was taking on herself towards them the care and responsibility becoming an adopted daughter of the house; and while Ellen, Lydia, and Miss Creswell placed her in bed, and tendered all the aid available to one whose soul is crushed to the dust by accumulated misfortune, the Harringtons and Colonel Hamilton entered into deliberate discussion of the farther steps

necessary to be taken for the family. An inquest must, of course, be held on the body of Mr. Hamlyn; and Andrew Harrington insisted upon placing in the hands of Walter a considerable sum for the immediate needs of the establishment.

Little accustomed to receive pecuniary favours, and still less disposed to receive them from his well-thinking but harshly-spoken uncle, Captain Hamlyn was about to reject the offer, when Andrew Harrington interrupted him.

"You have no right to trifle with the destinies of your mother, my dear nephew!" said he. "Henceforward, the responsibilities of a family man are on your shoulders; and the sooner you accustom yourself to the idea that nothing now belongs to you in this house, the better. These are afflicting words, Walter; but you will expose yourself to bitterer mortifications than any you are likely to meet at the hands of a kinsman who loves you, unless you make up your mind at once to the just decree which apporitions all you have been accustomed to consider your own to the creditors of your father's estate. It is on this account I would fain have my poor Sophia and her girls safely and respectably lodged under my roof."

Satisfied that reflection would convey a better lesson to the bewildered young man than all his exhortations, the sturdy but good-hearted merchant now left him to himself; but scarcely had he quitted the house, when Walter was exposed to new and equally kind solicitations from another quarter.

"I have insisted upon the privilege of family connexion to intrude upon you, my dear Captain Hamlyn," said Lady Roherwood, who chose to accompany her nephew on his next return to the house. "I am come in the name of my sister, who cannot altogether intrust her message to Dartford; and poor Geraldine is so ill, so nervous, so overwhelmed by the misfortune that has befallen her poor child, as to be incapable of leaving the house. She has begged me, therefore, to express a hope that your mother and the girls will take shelter in her quiet house from the distressing scenes that await them here. To dear Lydia she feels almost entitled. But she has a heart and home for them all, if you will prevail on Mrs. Hamlyn to regard her and the rest of us in the affectionate light in which we wish to be considered."

Lord Dartford now broke in with entreaties to his friend to comply with the wishes of the marchioness; and Walter, who saw they were fully aware of the ruin of his unfortunate family, felt deeply impressed by their prompt and generous renewal of attentions towards the *widow of the bankrupt*! Very little, however, did he suspect the full amount of their generosity. Very little did he conjecture that flying rumours had already reached even the Marchioness of Dartford (with the hundreds of flimflams vibrating about in London clubs and London society—the flash notes in general circulation—where and how speedily will not rumours extend?) that Hamlyn the banker had escaped by his untimely end not only the shame of bankruptcy, but the rigour of the law. Already the words fraud and embezzlement connected themselves with his dishonoured name!

"It is quite impossible for Mrs. Hamlyn and her daughters to remain here, my dear Walter!" exclaimed Lord Dartford: "still less would it be advisable for them to remove to Dean Park.

If they will not give my mother the happiness of receiving them in town, at least prevail on them to consider Dartford Hall their own. There they would be quite alone, quite unmolested, quite independent. There the indulgence of their grief would be undisturbed. I scarcely know how to say it, but it is necessary for me to add, that a thousand pounds have been paid by our banker, in Mrs. Hamlyn's name, to a credit at Drummond's."

These generous offers were received by Walter with due acknowledgment, but with an entreaty that the sun might go down on their grief ere any future measures were determined. For the whole family rest was indispensable. Early on the morrow the inquest was to be held, which was to decide whether propitiatory victims were to be offered up to the memory on which, at that moment, execrations were being heaped from every quarter; and Captain Hamlyn was convinced that, till the remains of his father were consigned to the grave, the widow would remain faithful to her post of duty.

While the affliction of the family was thus surrounded with deferential regard, the outcries against the baseness and hypocrisy of the fraudulent bankrupt became not only deep, but loud. He had deceived everybody—he had abused the confidence of everybody—and friend and foe were alike involved in his ruin. The blow of the failure of Hamlyn and Co. had a stirring effect in the city. If they were insecure, who was solid? If the painstaking, virtuous, exemplary Hamlyn was a knave, whose honesty was to be trusted? More than one banking-house, of the highest reputation, had cause to rue the discoveries of that day!

But amid the disregarded clamours and lamentations of the injured clients of the house, those more immediately connected with it were among its bitterest, because most capable, assailants. The first document secured by Spilsby, in his search during the night preceding Richard Hamlyn's decease, was the fatal paper whose signature was so compromising to himself; and this once committed to the flames, he felt re-established in the security of innocence, and privileged to purchase his own indemnity by zeal in detecting the delinquencies of his late employer, and fervour in pointing them out. From the peculiarities of the case, it was decided that the bankruptcy of the firm could not be too speedily legalized; and before the grave had closed over Richard Hamlyn, the Gazette completed the publicity which the details of the inquest had imparted to his ruin and disgrace.

The columns of the daily papers now teemed with anecdotes of his crimes and misdemeanors. It was the interest of the Vernon family, and the friends of the still more deeply-implicated offender by whose hand he had fallen, to clothe his name and cause with all the infamy of which both were only too susceptible; and already the memory of the man who for so many years had been esteemed without spot or blemish, was loaded with all the disgrace of a commercial swindler and political adventurer, whose disastrous end was, in fact, mere matter of retribution.

There was something almost fiendish, meanwhile, in the malignant care with which Spilsby, and his advisers Messrs. Wigwell and Slack, contrived to place the frauds and embezzlements of Hamlyn in the clearest light. Though, till the first meeting of creditors, there was no need

to publish the particulars of the funds abstracted and securities misapplied, the newspapers were soon in possession of circumstances that could only have emanated from authority; and not a private paper, not a secret memorandum, of the man so cautious in his frauds that his very shadow was scarcely admitted to participation in the mystery, but was now a matter for advertisement on all the walls and palings of the metropolis, to augment the sale of the Sunday papers!

Such is the shortsighted cunning of the crafty—such the hollowness of dishonest ostentation! The errors committed by Richard Hamlyn, the crimes perpetrated by the banker, had originated solely in a desire to create in the eyes of the world a false seeming of opulence and dignity. And now, not a huckster within twenty miles of Dean Park—not an apprentice in the city of London—but was aware to a fraction of the amount to which old Walter Hamlyn had been involved at his death, and of the annual thousands abstracted by him from the property of his constituents, to enable him to give costly dinner-parties—figure at royal entertainments—and maintain in the history of the shire of Warwick the factitious consequence of "Hamlyn of Dean Park."

The man of iron will was already mocked, and derided in his shroud by the puppets he had despised—the man of immaculate virtue recognised as a knave—the man of exquisite dissembling unmasked, that all might point the finger at his detection! The very beggar at the crossing in Lombard-street, who had been wont to profit by his pharisaical almsgiving, would not for worlds have exchanged the memory of his life of mud and rags, hunger and cold, for that of the man of purple and fine linen, who had dipped in the dish with princes of the blood—fattened on the good things of this world—commanded the cheers of Parliament—the esteem of his fellow-citizens—and the confidence of dupes to the amount of hundreds of thousands!

The person who had most to suffer from the weight of obloquy heaped on the memory of Hamlyn, during the first few days succeeding his decease, was Lord Dartford. Walter and Henry were confined to the house, almost to their bed, and care was taken by the servants that no newspapers reached the hands of either. But the marquis, though the greater portion of his time was spent in Cavendish Square, could neither turn a disregarding eye to the statements that met him at every corner, nor a deaf ear to the entreaties of his uncle Lord Crawley, that he would seriously consider to what extent his honour was pledged, ere he degraded the unblemished name of his family by connexion with that of one of the most consummate villains of modern times.

"I should be a still greater villain myself, if, for a moment, I confounded my affianced wife or my future brothers-in-law with one who is a disgrace to the country!" replied the marquis, with indignation. "On the contrary, I am only in hopes my mother will accelerate the period fixed by herself for my marriage, in order to redeem my dearest Lydia the sooner from a name that so ill becomes her. The first thing she did on hearing her father's insolvency was to release me from my engagement. Were she aware of the odious circumstances connected with it, I verily believe that excess of delicacy would inspire her with the determination never, to become

my wife. Be assured, therefore, my dear uncle, that, with all due deference to your authority, nothing will be left undone on my part to hasten the solemnization of our marriage."

This generous resolution did not, however, prevent him from being hourly molested by some new proof of Hamlyn's coldblooded hypocrisy, or some fresh instance of the distress occasioned in private life by his fraudulent transactions. Lord Dartford literally trembled at the idea of what his friend Walter might have to undergo when he emerged from his present retirement. Already he had announced his intention of leaving his regiment; the six thousand pounds he would receive for his troop constituting, for the future, his sole provision in life.

At present, however, the whole attention of the young man was absorbed by the instructions of the two Harringtons concerning the administration of the bankrupt's estate, and their painful duty towards those denounced by the finding of the Inquest, as the **WILFUL MURDERERS** of their father!

The first bitter lesson imparted to the two young men concerning the dishonour which had befallen them in the person of the deceased regarded the interment of his remains. To the widow had been referred the question concerning the spot, selected in his lifetime by Mr. Hamlyn, for his last resting-place; when both Walter and Henry eagerly forestalled her answer by naming the family-vault at Ovington, which contained the ashes of their grandfather.

"I should almost have advised," was Andrew Harrington's remark on this suggestion, "that he were buried quietly in town. Under the circumstances of the case, the less observation provoked, the better. If you abide by my opinion, you will consign your father to the grave, in the most private manner, at Kensal Green. It would be a deep humiliation to all of you were any painful demonstration of public feeling to occur at the funeral."

Mrs. Hamlyn was silent—Walter indignant—Henry surprised. A memorandum in the handwriting of the deceased, found shortly afterwards, having, however, expressly stipulated his place of interment by his father's side, even the Harringtons (who, much as they despised and condemned the conduct of Hamlyn, admitted his filial piety to have been beyond all praise) coincided in Walter's desire that his wishes, on this point, should be strictly respected.

Orders were accordingly issued for the opening of the family-vault; and then it was the Hamlyns became first aware of a heart-rending visitation consequent upon the recent event in Lombard-street, which the kindly interposition of Colonel Hamilton had preserved from their knowledge. The amiable wife of the good vicar, startled into a premature confinement by the tidings, indiscreetly communicated, of Mr. Hamlyn's death and bankruptcy, had fallen a sacrifice to the shock of knowing the inheritance of her children, and the savings of her poor, to be involved in the common ruin. On the second day, fever had come on; and in the height of her delirium, calling upon the grasping banker to render back the widow's mite, the orphan's pittance, the solace of the aged, the bread of the hungry, which he had plundered to gild the waste of his ostentation, the exemplary protectress of Ovington had given up the ghost!

In order to qualify the letter addressed by Walter to Dr. Markham concerning the burial

of him who had been the means of laying his wife in the grave, Mrs. Hamilton judged it indispensable to communicate this mournful intelligence to the family.

Still, the hearts of the young men were too full of their father and his last wishes not to persevere. Their letter was addressed to Jacob Durdan, as churchwarden of the parish, instead of the afflicted vicar; while the immediate answer of the former was addressed to his respected neighbour, Colonel Hamilton, rather than to the children of him whom he regarded as little better than a common thief.

"If I might make so bold, your honour," wrote the farmer, who had given practical proof that *he*, at least, understood the meaning of the word honesty, "I would ask you to recommend the family at Dean Park (whom I should think little enough on if they hadn't the luck to call you friend) not by no means to think of bringing down the body of the late Mr. Hamlyn to Ovington Church. I wouldn't answer for the consequence, sir! I wouldn't answer for what insults might be offered to the corpse. We're decent folks hereabouts, your honour, and noways given to show disrespect to the dead. But I do believe, as I'm a Christian man, that the coffin would be torn to pieces by the populace! It isn't only, sir, for the Savings' Banks, and Loan Societies, and Benefit Societies, as he robbed so shamefully, or the poor firesides he deprived of their hope and comfort, by carrying off the little they'd scraped together by the labour of a long life. It isn't only that, sir! But your honour do know how the vicar is respected among us, and what Madam Markham was to the poor folks hereabouts. And after seeing that dear lady carried to her grave, sir, with the coffin of her innocent babe, by her side, and not a dry eye in the parish from the thought that 'twas the ruin of her poor children that cut short her useful, valuable days—after that, your honour, to see that swindling hypocrite brought down among us with all the pomp of mourning coaches and sable feathers, would be apt to exasperate the villagers beyond what's safe.

"I humbly hope, colonel, you won't attribute this letter to any anger because of my being put to the cost of deeds for the sale of my farm, to no purpose in the world. Only if you'd be pleased, sir, to apprise the young gentlemen (again whom nobody bears an ill-will for what's no fault of theirs), you'd do 'em a real service, and a kindness to your humble servant to command,

"JACOB DURDAN."

Such was the first intimation to the young Hamlyns of the abhorrence in which the memory of their father was likely to be held! The lesson was a cruel one; but there is no rebelling against such instruction. Already, the proud spirit of Walter was completely broken by the varied humiliations arising out of the recent events; and when he returned from laying the head of his father in an obscure corner of one of the metropolitan cemeteries, and saw his mother and sisters profit by the dusk of evening to quit forever the gorgeous mansion, the remote origin of so much of their present misery, he felt that the glory of his days was departed. The hateful position in which Alberic Vernon stood towards him, rendered every tenderer feeling connected with that family a source of bitterness. He had no consolations—no, not one! His ~~past~~ had been in the world—his delight in

its pomps and vanities. Out of the vortex of London, he had never framed a wish or indulged an ambition. And what was to become of him, now that society was closed against him—the giddy pleasures of vanity suppressed—the aspiring hopes of vaulting ambition blighted forever?

If upon Henry the blow had fallen with a less withering influence, it was because the weight was lessened by the participation of an affectionate heart—it was because the wound was envenomed by the ill blood of selfish vanity. Henry Hamlyn was deeply humiliated by the shame which had fallen upon his father's house, and the discoveries which withdrew from his veneration the memory he would have delighted to honour. But while the darkness of his prospects was lightened by the contemplative and unworldly frame of his mind, the turpitude of his father was in some degree extenuated by the moderation arising from a more extended philosophy. To his view, a portion of the crime was chargeable upon the vices of our social institutions and the corruption of a degenerate age.

"But for the idle emulation of my grandfather with Lord Vernon, arising out of an indefinite state of society and confusion of classes," argued he, "my father would have remained a thrifty, frugal, laborious man of business. To my father, the old man bequeathed the choice between exposing his prodigality to shame, or keeping up the farce of pretended opulence and competition with the great. The task of dissimulation once begun, in deference to the faults and follies of his parents—what so easy—what so gradual—as the sloping ways of duplicity? In the rash attempt to retrieve his fortunes and those of his clients by desperate speculations, he lost all sense of moral obligation. And how excitingly did the cheers of society and fawning of interested dependants stimulate his progress! Who cared to examine the sources of the opulence that conducted to their pleasures or ministered to their advantage? Moreover, and above all, if his command of money were acquired by unlawful means, his application of it was not wholly unworthy. If he took from the poor, he gave to the poor. His charities were boundless—his acts of generosity exemplary. But, alas! alas!" was again and again the concluding reflection of the sorrowing young man, "that ever I should be forced to have recourse to sophistry to palliate the errors of my once-loved, once-respected father! I remember the time when it would have been accounted, from one end of the city to the other, the vilest of calumnies to attribute so much as a lapse of discretion to Hamlyn the banker!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"Close up his eyes—for we are sinners all!"

SHAKESPEARE.

AMONG those who suffered most, and with most self-command, throughout these sad reverses, was Colonel Hamilton. Unblinded, like the young Hamlyns, by the instincts of nature in his appreciation of the conduct of him who was gone, he experienced all the natural imbecility of feeling arising from consciousness of being duped by those in whom we have placed the trust of friendship. A great gap, moreover, was suddenly created in his existence. He had lost his counsellor—his hand-in-hand companion

—his friend—and without even the comfort of bestowing a regret on his memory!

Nevertheless, his sentiments on the occasion were characteristic of all the disinterestedness and tenderness of his character. He lamented his loss of fortune chiefly as the diminution of his means of contributing to the happiness of his fellow-creatures; and, instead of bewailing himself, after Lord Vernon's fashion, as the most ill-used of mankind in being thus treacherously stripped of the major part of a fortune which he had been toiling his whole life long in banishment and self-denial to scrape together, he was never weary of thanking Heaven for the interposition which had detained so large a portion of his funds in India till the day of peril was over, and invested a lesser one in the house in Portland Place.

"Consider, my dearest Nelly," said he to his daughter-in-law, "that, had that fatal question been brought before Parliament only three weeks later, the consignment from the Bombay Company would have fallen into Hamlyn's hands, and been swallowed up with the rest! Reflect, my dear, what it would have been to have been reduced to absolute beggary—we, and the poor Johnstons and all! 'Tisn't for myself; for I could have made my way to Ghazerpore, and found welcome and work from my old Rajah, and laid my bones there as well as elsewhere. For me and Pincher don't want for much in this world, and sha'n't want even that much longer. But you, my poor dear child, whom I've taken so much pride and pleasure in filling with hopes of being prosperous and happy, you wouldn't have borne Indy, Nelly! For all you're so fond of the warmth of Italy, you couldn't have stood the climate of Ghazerpore. And even if you could, think what 'twould have been to Harry, poor fellow, to find you brought to such misery, and know it was occasioned by the iniquity of his father! So you see, my dear, 'twas Heaven's own mercy that Moonjee was so slow in fulfilling his engagements!"

Poor Ellen submitted to congratulate him, as he seemed to desire, on the loss of his two hundred thousand pounds; and secretly blessed the 'tis-well-it's-no-worse philosophy which so thoroughly reconciled him to a stroke of adversity that would not only have driven any other man to despair, but perhaps tempted him to visit upon the son the crime of the ungrateful sire!

"Heaven knows, my dear, 'twould be sinful were we to repine, so well off as we are, when others are suffering so much more severely! There's poor Miss Creswell, who had been looking forward to comfort and competence, left without a shilling, and life to begin again, just as she had earned the privilege of rest. There's that worthy Dr. Grantham, Quiddle was telling us of yesterday, with his large family of children, and his paralytic stroke. There's that wretched widow woman, who got hold of me by the arm the day I was coming away from Lombard-street with Harry, and talked about Hamlyn's obligations to her poor dear dead and gone John Darley, and that she should be turned out of the stable-yard where she'd bided for forty years. There's Sir Robert Maitland, whom I myself betrayed into the scrape; and, above all, there's poor, dear Markham, so broken-hearted, yet so resigned; with the children crying round his knees for their mother, who, were he to die to-morrow, would, maybe, be crying for bread! As to those poor souls at Ovington—oh! Nelly,

Nelly! The more I think of it all, the more I feel that I cannot be sufficiently grateful to Providence for such a mitigation of my lot, and the power of yielding them some assistance!"

Another person who drank with submission the bitter lees of the chalice of humiliation presented to her lips, was the banker's unfortunate widow. In the comfort afforded by the succourable hand extended towards her children by the brothers who, through life, had held apart from her husband, and in the unaltered affection of young Dartford for her beloved daughter, she found unlooked-for alleviations.

From the first hour of their tribulation, she perceived, by the care with which on all occasions the marquis chose to identify himself with Walter and Henry in their filial endeavours, that his intentions were unchanged by all that had occurred or might occur. And when, at the close of a month's mourning, he pressed for her consent to an immediate marriage, under the sanction of his whole family, Mrs. Hamlyn indulged in pious feelings of gratitude to Heaven for the tranquil destiny thus provided for her daughter, without a single grovelling idea or self-degradation. Conscious of the generosity of Dartford's conduct, she felt that it could meet with no richer reward than the affection of such a heart as Lydia's; and, in according the credit due to the young lover, did equal justice to the merits of her child.

It was from the house of her worthy uncle that Lydia went forth, in soberness and tranquillity, without so much as laying aside her mourning attire, to become the bride of one of the first nobles in the realm. In scarcely any other spot would she have found courage to leave her mother at such a moment. But the house of Andrew Harrington was one in which Mrs. Hamlyn could abide without a painful sense of dependence. He was a widower. His only child, a daughter some years younger than Harriet, not only adored her cousins, but was eminently benefited by Miss Creswell's sojourn under her father's roof; and towards his sister, the blunt merchant was uniformly and tenderly scrupulous in moderating his expressions and mollifying his deportment. She had no difficulty in perceiving that, if Walter had no severer Mentor, he had also not a truer friend on earth, than his uncle Andrew.

"For that young man, Sophy," he would sometimes say to his sister, "all that has happened is for the best. The break-up was just in time. He was not quite spoiled—was spared the evil which I am assured awaited him of having a silly, useless, expensive doll of a wife upon his hands—and has learned the value of worldly friendships and the hollowness of fashionable life. A few more years to take the nonsense quite out of him, and I don't desire better than to have him for a son-in-law. Little Sophy will take a couple of hundred thousands or so to the man who chooses to call himself Harrington for her sake (as good a name as Hamlyn, as I fear you've found out to your cost!); and it will be your own fault, my dearest sister, if you do not, in the interim, make my poor neglected girl all you can wish in a daughter-in-law!"

An interruption shortly occurred, however, in the attentions of the aunt, the lessons of the governess, and the delight which Sophy Harrington was beginning to take in the society of her cousins. Soon after the Marchioness of Dartford was settled in her new home, her be-

loved mother was beset with the warmest invitations.

"You would not hear of a visit to Dartford Hall at my husband's entreaty!" wrote Lydia; "will you persist, dearest of mothers, in your refusal to myself? I am not half happy here, till I have you and Harriet under my roof."

And when the dearest of mothers arrived in Shropshire, she found that one of those miracles which prove that wealth can sometimes be a blessing had been wrought in her behalf! Such a cottage—surrounded by such a garden—and furnished with such elegant simplicity as never cottage was furnished before—had been completed for her use! Furniture, plate, linen, books, not only marked with her name, but chosen with such careful and tender deference for all her tastes and occupations! Not a flower, not an author that she loved, but was there to greet her; and though nothing could be more unpretending than the little snugery, it was so well distributed as to contain everything and everybody; Harriet's and Miss Creswell's room adjoining her mother's; and not only dens for Walter and Henry, but pleasant spare chambers for Colonel Hamilton and Ellen, whenever they could be prevailed upon to join the family party at Dartford Hall.

At present, they seemed riveted to the manor. The first removal to Burlington from town was a severe effort to the poor colonel. He had scarcely courage to pass the lodge-gates of Dean Park, and almost as little to survey from his library-windows the Braxham woods overhanging the Hyde.

"Nevertheless, disagreeable as it all is, my dear, and painfully as I am haunted, which ever way I turn, by reminiscences of poor Hamlyn and his dear wife and girls, I feel it my duty to be here. The place is mine for the next twenty years; and if I don't abide in't, who *will*? Luckily, the means are left me. I can't keep it up in quite the style I intended, but we may live here decently, Nelly, and pay our way. I must look sharper after Robson, and you be a bit of a house-ify (if Goody Johnston will let you). For you see, my dear, Orvington has lost everything in losing Dean Park (which mayn't find a purchaser for ages, considering the difficulties about the title), to say nothing of poor dear Madam Markham, who'll never find a substitute while the world stands; and this, without considering the ruin wrought in every house within twenty miles round by that sinful bankruptcy! So if you and I were to absent ourselves, and the village to lose the profit of the manor being inhabited, in addition to all the rest, I should feel that we had much to answer for!"

It sometimes puzzled the good colonel to determine how matters would be arranged as regarded this determination to reside at Burlington, when the period arrived for Henry, who was completing his studies at Cambridge in compliance with the desire of his uncles, to fulfil his engagements with the "beautiful Ellen," in compliance with his own—in a spot so hateful to his feelings from its vicinity to Dean Park. For, with all Mrs. Hamilton's grateful affection for her untrustworthy father-in-law, she still persisted in her bad habit of keeping her little love affairs a secret from him; and had never afforded him a hint either that the word of Lord Crawley and interest of the six Elvaston votes was pledged to procure an appointment abroad

for him whom the hints of Lady Devereux and the tact of Lord Edward Sutton readily pointed out to the family at Ormeau as his successful rival; or that she and Harry had already agreed to spend the first two months after taking his degree in happy companionship with her under the roof of his kind mother, who had already taken the stump of myrtle under her protection, and placed a bracket in her little drawing-room to support Gibson's beautiful bust of Diana.

But if Ellen left the good old gentleman thus fairly in the lurch, it was only because she was forming ulterior projects of happiness for himself, which, prematurely to announce, would have been assured to mar. Moreover, Mrs. Hamilton was not without hopes that the winding-up of Sir Roger Burlington's affairs, which was taking place in the hands of a Master in Chancery, in consequence of the death of the trustee, might enable Lady Burlington to return to England and bring up her son on his paternal estates; in which case, nothing would be easier or more agreeable to Colonel Hamilton than to cancel the lease.

The most painful trial; meanwhile, experienced by Ellen and the good colonel, among the many that awaited them on their return into Warwickshire, was their first interview with the vicar. Mortifications they bore without wincing. The impertinent self-consequence of Barlow of Alderham, who forced himself upon them in a morning visit, for the sole purpose of chanting his Psalms, that the man by whom the county had been disgraced, and the funds of its hospital and lunatic asylum plundered, did not belong to one of "the old county families," was a thing to smile at; and the ill-repressed exaltation of Gratwicke of Gratwicke House at the certainty that, henceforth, his donations to the Warwickshire charities would be first in magnitude on the list, a thing for christianly compassion. But it was a severe ordeal to walk through that miserable village—that village, whose almshouses and infirmaries were now closely shuttered up—that village, whose rags had been taxed and whose barley-leaves rendered scant to swell the profusion of the base impostor who had so long pretended to act as its benefactor—to the humble but once cheerful vicarage, whose household gods that hollow-hearted guest of princes and haranguer of senates, Hamlyn the banker, had stamped irretrievably into dust!

"I wish to the Lord o' Mercy the meeting was over, Nelly!" faltered the colonel, as they entered the well-known swing-gate and the little garden, now weedy and disordered from neglect. "I can't bear the thoughts of seeing her chair empty and those poor little ones in their black frocks. Well! she's in a better place! If any one can be sure of salvation, 'tis such a meek and self-denying soul as *she* was. Nelly! I wish the meeting was over!"

It was a great relief to the old gentleman to find that Dr. Markham had just stepped across the fields to Durdan's farm. But Ellen, aware how much it had cost them both to prepare for entering the house, was resolved that the benefit of the effort should not be lost. Besides, she had some little presents in her pocket which she had brought from town for the children; and after asking to have them brought into the parlour, walked boldly in. As the colonel had foretold, it was sad work to look upon the vacant chair and formal, tidy room; in comparison with the litter of the old work-table, on which

clothes for the poor were always in progress, or the children's spelling-books, with their dogs' ears, lying about as if they had a right to be there. Ellen would have given much but to have seen a skein of silk or ball of cotton on the carpet. She had not felt so heart-bound since she abided under the same roof with the unburied body of the banker.

Nor were her feelings much relieved when little Kitty made her appearance—hiding, her now shy face—led in by the nurse too happy in having a new visitor to whom she could relate the old-told tale of her poor dear angel of a dead-and-gone mistress's sufferings; and how, if there was a God in heaven, Hamlyn, the banker, would be brought to eternal punishment!

"She never held up her head after the news, ma'am!" said she, while the colonel turned away to the window, pretending not to hear, but in reality to conceal his emotion. "The poor babe, ma'am, was still-born—never stirred, the doctor said, from the moment of its poor mother's hearing of Squire Hamlyn's having made away with himself. And at last, ma'am, when the fever and delirium com' on, 'twas the most affecting thing as ever was heard, how the poor dear soul kept talking of the ruined families in the village, one by one—how poor old Parsons would have no coals or blankets this winter for his rheumatism—and what the carpenter's orphans would do—and such like; and then, bursting out a-singing, all as one as she was in the organ-loft; and never did her poor voice sound finer nor more sweet than only half an hour afore she died—and master's hand in hers, begging her to compose herself, and not sing so;—and *she* laughing outright, and then, a prayer, and then, flying off to Mary Haines, the poor 'oman as went up for a cancer from Ovington to the county Hospital; and at last, another hymn, as clear and sweet as a nightingale! Everybody present said it was the song of the angels!"

"She is an angel, Mrs. Smith!" cried the colonel, turning abruptly round—"an angel with God!"

And the poor nurse, whose face was already covered with her apron, sobbed only the louder for that assurance.

"If you'd but ha' heard the poor dear children a-calling after their mamma, sir, those first two or three days!" said she; "I'm sure I thought poor master would ha' gone distracted! Not that he's much better now, sir. Look here!" continued the good woman, opening the door of a little vestibule that led to the vicarage-garden, and pointing to a bonnet and shawl that were hanging up, which Ellen recognised from having hundreds of times met poor Mrs. Markham arrayed in them, when fulfilling her errands of charity in the village. "Master won't hear of these being taken down, ma'am! though it goes to everybody's heart to see 'em still hanging there. I got up betimes, one morning, afore he was astir, and moved 'em, and thought he'd never miss 'em. Bless you, sir! as he came through the hall to read morning prayers, he saw at a glance they was gone, and know'd nobody'd dare to touch 'em but me. So, 'Smith!' said he, 'let those things be instantly replaced!' And them as ever heard master speak in *that* tone, sir, know there's to be no reply. So I went and fetched 'em on the instant, with tears in my eyes. And ever since, ma'am, I've noticed that when poor folks out of the village

comes to ask for assistance (and since Hamlyn's failure master's obliged to think *twice* about granting it, where he didn't used to think *once*!), the first thing as ever he does is to glance up at that poor shawl and bonnet; as much as to say, if *she* was still here, my poor people, you wouldn't have been forced to come here to ask for help! But God's will be done!"

At the close of this mournful narrative, Ellen, who was petting poor little Kitty upon her knee, found that her own tears were stealing down the little white shoulder of the child; whose usual spirits were gone, and who, now left wholly to servants, seemed frightened rather than pleased by the endearments of a *lady*—a lady who was not mamma! She looked up wistfully into the face that was weeping over her; for, to a child, tears are synonymous with pain, punishment, offence; and for a month past, nothing else had met her little saddened eyes.

At that moment the vicar passed the window rapidly, and entered the room to welcome his unexpected guests. He was thin, haggard, pale—but made an effort to meet them with a smile—that he might not seem the only one unable to adopt his prescribed submission of "God's will be done!"

But the poor child allowed him no time for his intended welcome. Extending her little arms towards him, as though she had at last found a friend, she exclaimed, with imperfect utterance, "Take me home, dear papa—I want to go home—I want to go home!"

"You *are* at home, my darling—hush, hush! you *are* at home," whispered the poor father, pressing her to his heart.

"No, no! Kitty wants to go home!" reiterated the child, in a plaintive, piteous voice. And though that mournful cry was unintelligible to the ears of the Hamiltons, it wrung the heart of the poor vicar; who, on the day of his wife's funeral, ere the stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre, had been rash enough to take his infant in his arms, and, accompanied by his sobbing boys, show them the last resting-place of their mother; so that, in after-life, they might know where that holy woman was laid—and how her coffin had been scattered over with precious herbs by the hands of the poor—the poor whom she had comforted—the poor whom she had fed; a tribute how worthy to efface the sprinkling of dust to dust, wherewith the forms of the Church symbolically degrade our dead!

But the impression of this spectacle on the younger child had been most injurious. While the elder ones, with more extended knowledge, recoiled from the idea of darkness and the tomb, the younger, the tender infant, accustomed to

nestle in its mother's bosom, knew only that mamma was sleeping there—that before her lay her tender, patient, loving, thoughtful mother. Thenceforward, she had no home elsewhere! The vicarage was empty, her nursery a desert, the parlour silent, lonely, comfortless; even her father no longer the kind, happy papa of better days. The child was right. She wanted her mother. Where a mother is, is always home!

We owe it, however, to the patience of our readers to turn a brighter page at parting, and enable them to forget the sufferings of the banker's wife in the consolations of the banker's widow. Surrounded by her prosperous children and beautiful grandchildren, and on the eve of witnessing the happy marriage of her younger girl with Lord Edward Sutton, to the sincere satisfaction of the amiable family at Ormeau, Mrs. Hamlyn retains all her former angelic serenity—all her humble trust in the protection of that Providence, by whom, for its own wise purposes, her earlier days were chastened with affliction. Though her friend, Lady Burlington, is happily established at the manor, she has never found courage to revisit the neighbourhood; nor, though their mutual friends for a moment anticipated the probability of a nearer connexion between the gentle Sophia and the frank old soldier, to whom she has ever been the object of devoted regard, has she ever sufficiently relaxed from her grave reserve of widowhood, to encourage him to the risk of losing a friend by an attempt to convert her into a wife.

Henry's children, meanwhile, are General Hamilton's heirs; nor were they or Ellen less dear to the affections of the excellent mother-in-law, than the noble boys of Lord and Lady Dartford, or the fairy girl of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Harrington.

To repair the evils occasioned by the misdoings of the head of the family has been, of course, impossible. But it is noticed that the habits of both Walter and Henry are frugality itself; and the aid which periodically reaches the poor of Orvington, and the alleviations received by many of the humbler sufferers by the failure of the branch of Hamlyn and Co., can only be referred to the conscientious mercy of his representatives. Moreover, even the stern brothers of Mrs. Hamlyn are beginning to foresee so favourable a return from the South American speculations as may eventually compensate the evils so wantonly created by the fraudulent banker, and afford a golden sunset to the stormy days of the virtuous and unoffending BANKER'S WIFE.

THE END.

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